



AMONG THE LAKES



W. O. STODDARD

McCarteney.

No



Class

Book

PRESENTED BY

Hartwell M^cCartenry

July 26 1890

From Papa.

W. O. STODDARD'S BOOKS.

| | |
|--|--------|
| DAB KINZER. A Story of a Growing Boy | \$1.00 |
| THE QUARTET. Sequel to Dab Kinzer | 1.00 |
| SALTILLO BOYS | 1.00 |
| AMONG THE LAKES | 1.00 |
| WINTER FUN | 1.00 |

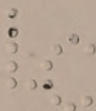
Complete sets, 5 vols., 12mo, in box, \$5.00.

AMONG THE LAKES

BY

WILLIAM O. STODDARD

AUTHOR OF "DAB KINZER," "THE QUARTET," "SALTILLO BOYS," ETC.



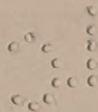
NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1890

P27
.S869
Am
2

COPYRIGHT, 1883, BY
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS.

Gift
Mr. S. McCartney
Feb. 27, 1936



PRESSWORK BY BERWICK & SMITH, BOSTON, U.S.A.

CONTENTS.

| CHAPTER I. | | PAGE |
|------------------------------------|--|------|
| PINEY | | I |
| CHAPTER II. | | |
| COUNTRY FUN | | II |
| CHAPTER III. | | |
| TRADING WITH THE INDIANS | | 23 |
| CHAPTER IV. | | |
| A GRAND ARRIVAL | | 33 |
| CHAPTER V. | | |
| THE CURIOSITY-SHOP | | 45 |
| CHAPTER VI. | | |
| PINEY TO THE RESCUE! | | 55 |
| CHAPTER VII. | | |
| KYLE WILBUR | | 65 |
| CHAPTER VIII. | | |
| THE HEROIC HEIFER | | 74 |
| CHAPTER IX. | | |
| A COUNTRY SUNDAY MORNING | | 85 |

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| CHAPTER X. | |
| AT THE MEETING-HOUSE | 93 |
| CHAPTER XI. | |
| A GREAT EGG-HUNT | 102 |
| CHAPTER XII. | |
| FISHING, SWIMMING, AND THE RAM | 113 |
| CHAPTER XIII. | |
| BI ON THE BALL-GROUND | 122 |
| CHAPTER XIV. | |
| UP AND DOWN THE ROAD | 132 |
| CHAPTER XV. | |
| EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY | 142 |
| CHAPTER XVI. | |
| GREAT TRIALS COMING | 153 |
| CHAPTER XVII. | |
| IT NEVER RAINS BUT IT POURS | 167 |
| CHAPTER XVIII. | |
| EXAMINATION-DAY | 177 |
| CHAPTER XIX. | |
| THE EXHIBITION | 190 |
| CHAPTER XX. | |
| PREPARING FOR A VOYAGE | 199 |
| CHAPTER XXI. | |
| THE VOYAGE BEGINS | 207 |

CONTENTS.

v

CHAPTER XXII.

| | PAGE |
|------------------------|------|
| A GRAND TIME | 219 |

CHAPTER XXIII.

| | |
|---|-----|
| WHAT BECAME OF THE LUNCH-BASKET | 230 |
|---|-----|

CHAPTER XXIV.

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| PRIZES AND SURPRISES | 240 |
|--------------------------------|-----|

CHAPTER XXV.

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| INTO THE VACATION | 249 |
|-----------------------------|-----|

CHAPTER XXVI.

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| BUMBLEBEES AND HONEY | 257 |
|--------------------------------|-----|

CHAPTER XXVII.

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| THE HAY-RIDE | 268 |
|------------------------|-----|

CHAPTER XXVIII.

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| THE MATCH GAME | 278 |
|--------------------------|-----|

CHAPTER XXIX.

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| THE BATTLE-GROUND | 287 |
|-----------------------------|-----|

CHAPTER XXX.

| | |
|--|-----|
| THE LAST WEEK IN THE COUNTRY | 297 |
|--|-----|

CHAPTER XXXI.

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| IN THE GREAT CITY | 304 |
|-----------------------------|-----|

CHAPTER XXXII.

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| A GREAT, NEW WORLD | 311 |
|------------------------------|-----|

AMONG THE LAKES.

CHAPTER I.

PINEY.

"SHE's done it! I give it up. They're making the biggest kind of a show. I don't believe they could beat that much, if they tried. Aunt Keziah said she'd have some peonies in bloom when the folks got here from the city. I wasn't more'n half sure she could, but she's done it."

It was somewhat out of season for peonies, sure enough; but there they were, blooming witnesses to the floral skill of aunt Keziah. The sun had not been up a full hour as yet; but he was shining very warmly upon the plump and rosy face of the uncommonly healthy-looking boy who stood in the dewy grass of that ample front yard, gazing down at the peonies.

"The old tub's chock full of 'em," he continued. "They're almost all burst out now. They'll burst the tub next. What fat, red-faced fellows they are!"

Aunt Keziah says I'm just like 'em, but I don't care. They're real pretty, anyhow. I don't believe I'll ever tumble all to pieces; and they will, soon as they get through bursting. I'm fat all the year round."

"Hullo, Piney!"

He did not turn around, nor even take his hands out of his pockets, as he answered the shrill hail from the gate, —

"Hullo, Kyle! Is that you? Have you drove your cows to pasture? I have."

"Course I have, or I guess I wouldn't be over here. What's the matter with your pinies? It looks as if the tub was a-sinking with 'em."

"Sinking? Well, you'd sink if you had all those flowers to carry. Ain't they red, though!"

"Reddest kind. Aunt Keziah named you after 'em, didn't she?"

"That's what she says."

"They're redder'n you are, — some. They're a good deal handsomer too."

"I ain't any kind of flower, and I don't live in a tub. Aunt Keziah says I burst every thing that's put on me, though, just as they do. That's why they make all my clothes so loose to begin with."

"Those fellows are bursting all their clothes. There isn't any mistake about that. Glad there's no danger my skin'll ever crack that way."

"I say, Kyle, how'd you like to go fishing?"

"Tip-top. Guess I would. That's what fetched me over. It's a Saturday."

"That's so; and you know we can't go next Saturday."

"Well, no," said Kyle. "I guess we can't. And I haven't more'n half learned my piece for the 'cademy exhibition."

"I've learned mine. 'Tisn't that I'm afraid of just now."

"What then?"

"What then!" exclaimed Piney, with a slight opening of his honest eyes in astonishment. "Why, the examination!"

"Oh! that's nothing. I'm all right. Wilbur begins with a 'W;' and that puts my name a'most down to the bottom of the list. Bill Young and I talked it all over. There's a string of 'em, you know, and they'll never get down to him or me."

"They'll get to me, then, sure's you live. Oh, but won't I turn red in the face when my name's called! And won't I just forget all I know, right off!"

"Piney? Piney? Piney? Come in! To brea-ak-fast!"

A clear, sweet, girlish voice was calling, very positively, from the top of the steps in the middle of the front piazza; and Piney at once started for the house.

"I'll come over right away after breakfast," shouted Kyle Wilbur, after him,—"just as soon as I eat mine."

"All right," shouted Piney in response; and he added to himself, "He ought not to miss that, nor his dinner either. Aunt Kezi says his face'd do for a hatchet. I wish she'd call me by some other name. But then, Dick's the nickname for Richard, and I don't know as I'd like that any better. She might have picked out a meaner flower if she'd tried. Bull-thistles are red too. What if she'd called me 'Thistles'?"

There was evidently a love of fun in the family, at all events; and a fair share of it had come down to him.

"Piney, why don't you hurry?"

"What for, Roxy?"

"Why, for breakfast. It's all ready. I've been helping aunt Keziah."

"Did you boil the radishes?"

"Not this time. Guess I know better'n that now; but I picked the strawberries, and I put lots of sugar on them."

"Brown sugar?"

"No, of course I didn't. I put on the white fine sugar out of the wooden box. Aunt Keziah put the box on the table, and I sugared the berries."

The look upon Piney's face told very frankly of

his liking for strawberries, with cream and plenty of sugar. As for Roxy's face, there was a large amount of expression there also. It was full of pride and satisfaction over the quality and quantity of her morning's work. It was not so plump a face as her brother's; although her eyes and hair were as dark as his, and any one would have said at once that she was his sister. She could hardly have been over seven or eight years of age, while Piney must have been somewhere between thirteen and fifteen. When a boy is large for his age, and is growing fast, it is not always easy, for even the best judges of boys, to say within a year or so how old he probably is.

Roxy was not at all large for her age: she was only a little too old for it. That was why she sometimes walked into mistakes, — such errors, for example, as the needless boiling of the crisp, fresh radishes.

Roxy and Piney went on into the house; and, without any reference to them, the sun rose slowly and steadily, higher and higher, promising a grand, warm June day. He had a great many pretty places to look down upon that morning, but not many which were prettier than that valley.

The old farmhouse stood right at the head of a little lake. It was big and white, with a high peaked roof, from which the dormer-windows looked

out as if they were forever watching for somebody who might be coming around the turn of the dusty road. A great many people did come, too, from time to time; but the windows on the roof sat right there, and watched for somebody else, all the same, as if these were not the right ones. There were no blinds up there; but there were dark-green blinds to all the windows of the lower story, and those which opened upon the front piazza came right down to the floor.

The barns and the hay-ricks were away back from the road, and the ground sloped gently from them to the front fence. The gates and all the face of the house looked towards the east and the sunrise. Towards the south, in like manner, all the ground sloped to the edge of the lake, without any swampy border by the water. The grass was kept pretty closely mown down, so as to make a very beautiful green lawn. You could have measured out of it a round dozen of perfect croquet-grounds if there had been any need for them.

Away to the northward, a mile and more, there was another little lake; and beyond that was yet another. A bright little bit of a river ran into the upper lake, and out of that into the next, and out of that into the third, and out of that, with a good deal more water to carry, it ran into the valley below. A man in a boat, if it were not too large,

could row himself all over those lakes, and from one to the other ; and then he could row out entirely, and follow the river, nobody knew exactly how far. Of course, if nothing should be in the way, and if nothing should happen to stop him, he could keep right on rowing until he should come to the end of the river. At least, that was what Roxy had said about it.

Nobody but the Indians on the Reservation, long miles to the northward, could pronounce the name of that river correctly ; but after all the white men gave up trying, and spelled it out, they called it the "Ti-ough-ne-au-ga." That was about as near as they could have hit that name if they had shot at it with a bow and arrow, not knowing how to shoot very well. It was very sweet and musical, nevertheless, especially when it was uttered by the right kind of people ; and it is just so with a great many other words.

Roxy had been in a particularly great hurry to have Piney come to his breakfast that morning. To tell the truth about her, she was somewhat apt to be a little ahead of time, and this was one of those times. When Piney entered the dining-room, the only person yet seated at the table was his younger brother "Chub" in his high-chair.

There was no need of asking that boy how he came by his name ; but, just at that moment, Chub

was uncommonly red in the face, and was pounding the table with a spoon, while he uttered a squall that made aunt Keziah put down the coffee-pot very suddenly, and rush in from the kitchen.

"Roxy? Roxy? What on earth are you doing to that baby?"

"No, I ain't. I ain't doing any thing at all. I brought him a whole saucerful of strawberries, and I poured the cream all over them."

"I never told you to!" exclaimed aunt Keziah. "You're a meddlesome girl. What can be the matter with that child?"

Chub squalled again, with a vigor which prevented any idea that his infant strength of lungs was failing him.

"Piney, ring the bell for your mother. Roxy, tell Ann to bring in the breakfast. Chub, tell me! What's the matter?"

"Berry! Berry sour," whimpered poor Chub, as he pushed the saucer away from him.

"Sour? No, they're not. They can't be. You naughty boy, to scare me so!"

"What does ail him, Keziah?"

A tall, pallid, 'languid-looking lady, evidently not in good health, came in at that moment; but even the arrival of his mother failed to pacify Chub.

"I don't know what's got into him. He's contrary."

He consented to be silent while the rest took their seats, however; and the mystery did not last long after that. It was almost a matter of course that Piney should be the first person to try a heaping spoonful of those ripe red berries.

"Mother! Aunt Keziah!" sputtered he, as he reached suddenly out for a tumbler of water.

"What is it, Piney?"

"The berries are salted!"

"Salted!" exclaimed aunt Keziah. "Piney Hunter! What do you mean?"

"Richard, my son," murmured his mother, "salted?"

"Yes, mother; just you taste 'em. No wonder Chub called 'em sour."

"O Roxy! Roxy Hunter! This is some of your work."

"No, mother. I saw aunt Keziah bring the box out herself."

"The salt-box! So I did, and the sugar-box too. They're just alike. Oh, dear! That child'll pizen us all yet."

Aunt Keziah's face was as red with vexation, almost, as Piney's own was with the laugh he was trying to keep down. He did his best, but some of it had to be laughed, to get rid of it. Roxy's face was pretty red too; for she had tasted the berries, and knew exactly what the salt had done for them.

“Roxy,” said her mother, “you can go right out into the garden, and pick some more berries. When you come in, you are not to have any.”

“Glad there’s plenty of ’em on the vines,” said aunt Keziah. “These’ll have to be thrown away. But, Elizabeth, what are we to do with Roxy? Suppose her uncle and aunt and all the rest had been here. I’d have died of mortification.”

“Uncle Liph wouldn’t,” said Piney. “He’d have laughed.”

“Not with salted berries in his mouth,” said aunt Keziah.

Poor crestfallen little Roxy was already marching out through the back door, with her basket on her arm, muttering, —

“I wish I’d ha’ tasted it before I put it on. Then I’d ha’ known it was salt.”

CHAPTER II.

COUNTRY FUN.

THERE were indeed vines and strawberries in great abundance in that garden, for aunt Keziah Merrill was as proud of all that grew there as she was of her peonies and of all her other flowers.

Roxy picked away as fast as she could ; but she was glad enough when, in a minute or so, her big, good-natured brother came out to help her.

“Don’t cry, Roxy,” he said, as he knelt down near her. “These berries’ll be just as good as the others were, and we’ll put sugar on them this time.”

“But I can’t have any of them,” whimpered poor Roxy.

“Never mind. I’ll ask mother if you can’t have some of mine. Let’s hurry. Kyle Wilbur and I are going a-fishing after breakfast.”

“Oh ! can I go with you ?”

“Not this time. You see, Roxy, we want to catch some fish.”

"I can catch fish."

"Well, yes, if you could sit still long enough to hook one. But I don't believe mother and aunt Keziah'll let you go."

Roxy was very much of Piney's opinion on that head; but she asked, all the same, as soon as they got into the house with their berries.

"In the boat?" exclaimed her mother. "And get upset, and get yourself drowned, maybe?"

"The boat won't upset."

"No, perhaps it wouldn't," said aunt Keziah. "But she's been a naughty girl this morning. Besides, I want her in the house: I'm going to make some cake."

"Cake? O aunty! I'd rather make cake than catch fish."

"Yes; but you must let things alone. I can't afford to have my cake salted."

"I won't touch."

"Mother," said Piney, "let me give Roxy some of my berries?"

"Just a few, then; but I wish her to remember about the sugar. Only give her a few."

"About the salt, you mean," said aunt Keziah. "Well, after all, she's a pretty good little girl sometimes; that is, if she wouldn't be so forward. I'll give her just a few of mine."

Chub said nothing about giving anybody a share

of the goodies in his own saucer, but he tasted them with scrupulous care before he trusted his mouth with a spoon-load of them. His natural confidence in strawberries and cream had been severely shaken that morning.

Piney did not linger long at the table. When he reached the shore of the little lake, with his rod and line all ready, and his bait in an old blacking-box, there was Kyle Wilbur sitting in the boat, and waiting for him.

"Guess you didn't eat much breakfast," said Piney.

"Yes, I did. Did you eat two this time? What made you so long?"

"Oh! I had to go out and pick some more strawberries." And then the story of Roxy's blunder had to come, and Piney told it in a way that made Kyle all but laugh himself out of the boat. If aunt Keziah had been there she would have said it was the best thing in the world for a thin, peaked-faced, hungry-looking boy like him.

In a minute or so more they were rowing away, straight across the lake, towards the woods on the other side. Both of them said they were sure the fish bit better over there than they ever did on the side nearest the farmhouse.

The boat was a good one, and not at all likely to be upset. It was square at each end, and the boys

spoke of it as "the scow." It was quite good enough for them to fish from, and it may be that they were right in what they said about the habits of the fish in that lake. They certainly seemed disposed to bite very freely that morning, along the shore where the tall trees leaned out over the water. The day was beginning to be a warm one, and the finny people may have gone over there with an idea that it was likely to be shadier and cooler than elsewhere by and by.

Both Piney and Kyle seemed to be pretty good fishermen, and the latter said he "guessed luck was with them for once." The perch and sunfish and bullheads came over into the boat, one at a time, quite regularly, every few minutes, for an hour or so. Piney even hooked one pickerel that must have weighed a pound.

"I caught a bigger one than that last week," said Kyle.

"Well, that's nothing; but it's good to catch 'em. They eat up all the others. Aunt Keziah hates 'em. She says they eat more'n any other fish there is, and can't get fat on it either."

"Guess I'm some kind of a pickerel, then. I say, Piney, have you practised your piece for the 'cademy exhibition?"

"Mother made me say it to her once, but I just don't believe I could ever say it before a crowd."

"Who's afraid of a crowd? I ain't. I don't care how many there is."

"I do, then."

"Look here, now. Why don't you try and speak it out here? It's just the place. What is it?"

"Oh, it's an old one! Everybody knows it. It begins, 'Oh, why does the white man follow my path?'"

"That's an Indian piece. You ought to speak it once right out in the woods like an Indian. Let's go ashore and try it."

Piney sat and seemed to be thinking for a moment, and his face grew very red indeed; but he came up to the mark quite promptly with, —

"Well, I will, if you won't tell anybody. Then will you speak yours after I'm done?"

"Of course I will. We've got fish enough for once."

"No, we haven't; but we can come back again, and catch some more. Let's go ashore now."

The anchor, a large, heavy stone, was at once pulled up from the bottom; and then the scow was quickly fastened to a bush on the bank, while the pair of young orators went on under the shade of the trees. They knew there would be nobody near enough to hear them, for all the men about the place were busy in the fields. In fact, the woods were as still and every other way as pleasant as

could have been asked for ; and, if the tall hickories and maples were getting ready to listen, they did not say a word about it to confuse the speakers. Besides, there was something new and fresh and remarkable about the whole undertaking.

“Hurrah, Kyle ! Look at what I’ve found !” suddenly exclaimed Piney. He had stooped to tie one of his shoes before beginning his piece, and he now held up something triumphantly. “I’m to be an Indian warrior, and here I’ve gone and picked up a real Indian arrowhead.”

Kyle examined it eagerly enough at first ; but he was not the kind of boy to admire any thing too much, and he coolly remarked, —

“That’s nothing. People pick ’em up everywhere. Father ploughed up a stone hatchet last spring. That’s a pretty big arrowhead, though. Most of ’em are little fellows. It’s too big to shoot.”

It was a piece of flint, about as wide as a half-dollar, and more than twice as long, tapering to a point at one end, with sharp, ragged edges, and at the other end it had a sort of a knob with a notch in it.

“That’s to fasten it to the arrow by,” said Piney. “Uncle Liph has any number of ’em. I mean to give him this when he comes.”

“I guess father’d let him have the stone hatchet,” said Kyle. “Did you say he was coming on a visit ?”

"We expect he'll get here to-night. There's a lot of 'em coming."

"All of 'em city folks."

"I don't care if they are. Now, Kyle, you stand over there by that hickory; and I'll stand here on this knoll, and I'll speak my piece. Don't you laugh now."

Piney brandished the stone arrowhead in his right hand, and boldly launched into his recitation.

"Oh! why does the white man follow my path

Like the hound on the tiger's track?

Does the hue of my dark cheek waken his wrath?

Does he covet the bow at my back?"

Right there Piney pointed fiercely over his shoulder with the arrowhead, resolving to have some kind of real bow provided to point at in time for use at the academy exhibition. He went safely through with verse after verse of the poetry, while Kyle Wilbur leaned against the hickory and watched him.

"First-rate," shouted Kyle. "But you'll never do it that way before a crowd. Are you sure you'll remember it all then?"

"Kind o' half-way sure."

"I wish I was half-way sure of remembering mine; but I ain't."

"Tell you what, Kyle. Guess I'd better have the arrowhead in one hand, and the stone hatchet in

the other. Then I could put it through. What piece did you learn?"

"Well, I picked out 'The boy stood on the burning deck.' It's awful old; but then I've spoken it before, and I won't be so likely to break down on it."

"'The boy stood on the burning deck,'" repeated Piney. "Why, that doesn't belong to the woods. You ought to practise that in the boat."

"Guess not," said Kyle. "You couldn't set the old scow afire, and she hasn't a square inch of deck."

"Oh! we can fix that. Come on. Gather all the birch-bark and hickory-bark you can lay your hands on."

"Why, what are you going to do?"

"I'll show you. Come along. I've got an idea in my head."

"You're always getting ideas in your head," grumbled Kyle; but he did as he was bidden, for it was plain, that, of those two boys, Piney Hunter was very decidedly the leader.

It took but a few minutes to gather armfuls of dry bark, and they hurried away towards the scow. Piney dropped his load on a dry spot in the bottom. Next, he picked up a long, wide, flat board which lay there, and put it across the top of the boat, from side to side.

"There's your deck, Kyle," he shouted, — "all the deck you'll want this time. Now for your fire."

The pieces of bark were quickly heaped upon the board, and a match and a wisp of paper from Piney's pocket did the rest. The fire was there.

"Now, Kyle!"

"Now what?" said Kyle, a little dubiously. "That isn't much of a deck, and you've made so much fire I can't stand on it."

"Can't help that. You can stand as close to it as the fire'll let you. You can make believe all the masts and sails are on fire over your head. You can make believe I'm your father, and I'm dead, and can't tell you to stop till you've done speaking your piece. Pitch in."

As he said that, Piney shoved the boat from the shore, and the bark began to blaze and smoke tremendously. He was a boy of ideas, and no mistake.

"'The boy'" — began Kyle, in a somewhat unsteady voice, as he stood up behind the small but vigorous bonfire on the board, —

"'The boy stood on the burning deck,

Whence all but he had fled.

The flame that lit the battle's wreck

Shone round him' —

ough — ough — ough — ough — Look a' here, Piney Hunter, you've swung the boat around so

the wind blows the smoke right in my face. I'll cough my head off — ough — ough ! ”

“I guess the real boy in the story had a coughing-spell before the old ship blew up,” said Piney. “Go ahead. Our ship won't blow up, — not till you finish your piece.”

There was no help for it, and Kyle went bravely on for several stanzas ; but, just as he huskily exclaimed in the poetry, —

“And shouted but once more aloud,
“My father, must I stay?” ”

he was compelled to add, “Hold on, Piney. If his boat had rocked like that, he wouldn't have staid in it half a minute. Don't be mean, now. I'm most through.”

“I won't,” said Piney ; and Kyle went on. He was going ahead splendidly, when Piney suddenly seized the board, with its blazing load, and shoved the whole thing over into the lake.

“It isn't time to blow up,” said Kyle, almost reproachfully.

“Go right on,” said Piney. “The deck was burned clean through, that's all. You'll have to speak the rest of it without any fire.”

Kyle went on, without missing a word ; but he sat down very suddenly, at the end of it all, as if he had doubts as to what might be Piney Hunter's next intentions.

"That's tip-top, Kyle," said Piney. "It's a great deal better'n mine. They won't let us set the academy-hall platform on fire, though. You'll have to do it without any deck."

"I won't be choked half to death with birch-bark smoke, either. I say, let's catch some more fish."

So they did, and the luck was every way respectable; but when they finally tired of it, and rowed across the lake for some dinner, aunt Keziah hardly looked at Piney's string of fish before she asked him, —

"What made you kindle a fire in the woods? Right in summer!"

"We didn't do it, aunt Keziah."

"You didn't kindle any?"

"All that fire was out on the water."

"In the boat? What for?"

"Why, it was all to help Kyle Wilbur speak his piece. He had to have some burning deck."

"Oh, dear! What a boy!"

A few more questions and answers brought out the whole truth of the matter.

"Piney Hunter!" exclaimed aunt Keziah, while the tears of laughter rolled down her cheeks. "You'll set the lake on fire next. — Roxy, keep your fingers away from those fish. There! I thought so. One of the bullheads has pricked you with his horns."

“O aunty! It hurts me awfully. I’ll never touch one of them again, — not as long as I live.”

“You’d better not, then. — It’s a real good string though, and I’m glad of it. Your uncle’s fond of fish.”

“And I’ve found an Indian arrowhead for him,” said Piney. “And Kyle Wilbur said he’d give me a stone hatchet that his father ploughed up.”

“Well, now,” said aunt Keziah, “he likes that sort of thing. It’ll just please him. — Roxy, go and call your mother. — Piney, wash your hands. It’s dinner-time. — But what won’t those boys do next! Fire in a boat!”

CHAPTER III.

TRADING WITH THE INDIANS.

EVERY now and then, while they were at the dinner-table, Roxy gave a pitying look at the thumb of her right hand. There was a very distinct mark upon it ; for the "horns" of a bullhead are sharp and stiff, and she had tried to pick up the slippery little fish without so much as remembering that he had any weapons about him.

"I didn't hurt him one bit," she muttered resentfully ; but Piney overheard her, and he answered, —

"No, Roxy, you didn't hurt him ; but I did when I caught him, and perhaps he knew you were a sister of mine."

"Teach her a lesson," said aunt Keziah. "Sometimes I almost wonder she has any fingers left : she puts them everywhere."

For all that, however, aunt Keziah put on her spectacles, and looked closely at the dent upon Roxy's thumb.

"There, dear, it isn't much. Don't make any more fuss about it."

"It hurts yet."

"I guess he didn't mean to hurt you."

"Yes, he did. I hope uncle Liph'll eat him up."

"All but his horns," said Piney. "You may have them."

It was a splendid summer day, and the doors of the house were all wide open. So were all the windows, but the blinds were carefully closed. Up on the roof, where there were no blinds, the dormer windows seemed to be more widely awake than common, as if they were looking out for the arrival of the expected visitors from the city. It was hours too early for them, whether the windows knew it or not; but a great many other travellers came along the road. The largest company which arrived together was a flock of sheep, with a man and two boys, and a dog to keep them going; and the noise they all made, just after dinner, brought out Piney Hunter and Roxy upon the piazza.

There was nothing unusual or wonderful about a flock of sheep, although that was quite a large flock; but, not a great distance behind them all, there also came such a queer-looking little man that Piney laughed outright as he exclaimed, —

"If there isn't the Woodchuck!"

"Why," said Roxy, "it's the blackberry Indian! There's Kyle Wilbur, too, coming to the gate."

"Yes, and there's Hawknose John coming around

the turn. See! He's trying to catch up with the Woodchuck."

"He's the chief, isn't he?"

"Well, no; not exactly. He isn't the head chief. The head chief lives in a good house up at the Reservation. He wouldn't pick blackberries, or whittle bows and arrows, for anybody."

"Piney, did you hear that?"

"Why, if the Woodchuck isn't trying to sing!"

"He's funny, isn't he?"

"Come down to the road, Roxy. I want to see Hawknose John."

Kyle Wilbur got there about as soon as they did, and all three stood at the side of the road. The last of the flock of sheep and its drivers had disappeared. Along came the Woodchuck, in the middle of the road, singing a queer sort of song, made up of rough, harsh-sounding words.

"That's real old Onondaga, Roxy," said Piney. "It's Indian. His mouth must be made different from yours or mine."

"And his ears too," said Roxy, "or he couldn't know what he's singing."

The Woodchuck was a short, broad, middle-aged man; and he was remarkably ragged and dirty looking. His face was dark and ugly; and his long, coarse, black hair came down upon his shoulders from under all that was left of what must once have

been a white man's high black hat. He had put a broad red ribbon around it, and he had stuck a feather in the ribbon on one side, and a strip of shining tin on the other, so that he was a very gay and funny looking old Indian that day, so far as his hat went.

The man who was now catching up with the Woodchuck so rapidly was a very different sort of a person. He was every bit as dark and "Indian-looking;" but he was tall and straight and thin, with a high, hooked nose that gave his face an almost fierce expression. In fact, if Hawknose John had lived in the old days, when his tribe was a great nation, it is very likely he would have been a notable warrior. He looked a good deal like one now, he was so stern, and stood so very straight in his moccasins. He was very near at last, and he spoke a few words to the Woodchuck in harsh, strong, guttural tones; and that Indian at once stopped his attempt at singing, and stood still. John was evidently very angry; but it could not have been about the feather or the piece of tin, for he, too, had a wide, red ribbon around the straw hat he wore, and he had on an old blue swallow-tailed coat with gilt buttons.

"Is he swearing?" asked Roxy.

"No," said Kyle Wilbur. "Hawknose John wouldn't swear: he's as good as a deacon. But

anybody can see he's mad. The Woodchuck's always getting into some sort of scrape."

He was in one now, beyond a doubt; for the tall Onondaga raised his long right arm, when he ended his rough scolding, and struck him hard upon the forehead with his clinched fist. It made a sharp, cracking sound as the blow fell; and over went the Woodchuck in the dust, as if he had been a human Onondaga Indian ninepin. He was not much hurt, however; for he at once picked himself up, rubbed his forehead, and marched off along the north road without saying a word. Hawknose John did not say a word either, but he pointed in that direction threateningly.

"John," said Piney, "what made you knock him down? He doesn't belong to you."

"Ugh! Woodchuck big fool. Drink whiskey. Hawknose John good friend. Knock him down and send him home. Go home pretty sober now. Not throw away any more money for old squaw."

"Why, John, he wasn't drunk."

"No; not much. Little bit. He sell berries for old squaw. He promise her he not drink at all. Heap lie. Go wicked and drink, just a little. Hawknose John knock him down, so he stop right there. White man not know enough to do that. Indian!"

"Yes," said Piney; "but what if he had been a real big Indian, and you was only a little one?"

"Boy ask too much question," said the tall Onondaga with dignity. "Got any potatoes?"

"Plenty of 'em," replied Piney. "I say, John, i that bow for sale?"

Piney had been eying, from the very first, an unusually long and handsomely finished bow which John had carried in his left hand. It was beautifully polished, and tapered nicely from the middle to its two ends; but it was likely to require a pretty strong arm to bend and use it. John now lifted it at arm's-length, and held it up for the boys to admire. He slowly remarked to Piney, —

"No. No sell him. Hawknose John give him away."

"Who did you give it away to?" asked Kyle Wilbur.

"Give it to aunt Keziah, so she give Hawknose John some potatoes for squaw. No sell bow."

"Oh!" said Piney, "that's it, is it? It's just the kind of bow she wants."

Kyle Wilbur made a good deal of fun about that remark, while Piney seized the bow and hurried back into the house.

"Aunt Keziah," he shouted, "see what a splendid present Hawknose John has brought you. It's just the very thing you were wishing for."

"Me, Piney? A present to me? Why, it's a hickory bow! What a pretty one it is! But what do I want of a hickory bow?"

"Oh! you can lend it to me when you're not using it. I'll take care of it for you. Besides, Hawknose John wants you to make him a present of some potatoes."

"He's always wanting something. They're a lazy, shiftless, good-for-nothing set of beggars."

"O aunty! you ought to have seen him knock down the Woodchuck, and send him home, just because he'd swallowed one drink of whiskey."

"Did he? Did you see him?"

Piney gave the details of John's queer "temperance lecture" very rapidly, and aunt Keziah listened with evident interest.

"I always said there was something good about John," she remarked, at the end of the story. "How many potatoes does he want?"

"He didn't say. He can't carry a great many all the way from here to the Reservation. It's a splendid bow."

"Well, go and tell him he may have as many as he can carry in a sack. New potatoes can't be had yet, and good sound old crops like ours are getting scarce and high."

It was likely that Hawknose John was aware of all that; and aunt Keziah's skill in the art of mak-

ing potatoes "keep over" was as well known as were some of her other wisdoms. She was very likely, too, to get good prices for what she sold; and she knew perfectly well that her Indian acquaintance was much too lazy a man to carry a heavy load far in that June weather.

"Piney's a good boy," she said to his mother, "and I like to humor him. Besides, it's only a few potatoes."

When the bargain relating to the exchange of free gifts was completed with Hawknose John, that tall, thin, keen-eyed old "warrior" drew from under his blue dress-coat a stout-looking sack. With that in his hand, he silently and solemnly followed Piney to the barn, and Kyle and Roxy sauntered along behind him.

"Aunt Keziah say 'have all what can carry,' ugh!" he remarked, as he leaned over the side of the potato-bin. Then he began to pick out the best ones, and drop them into his bag.

"Yes, John, you're only to have as many as you can carry."

"Good. Ugh. Hawknose John like that. Big Indian. Boy like potatoes, ugh?"

"Oh, yes! I eat 'em."

"Good for boy. Eat a heap. John got boy at home. Eat all day."

Piney began to think there must be some kind of

famine at the Reservation, as John went steadily on at the work of putting potatoes into that bag. He did not cease picking up and dropping in until the sack was so full that he could hardly tie the mouth of it.

"You can't carry that," said Piney.

"You see. Hawknose John big Indian. Put him right on shoulder."

So he did, with some effort; and he walked out of the barn with his load, although it made him stagger and waver in his walk. On he went, up the path that led through the garden and past the house. Aunt Keziah, with some other faces just behind her, was looking out of the kitchen-window; and she exclaimed, —

"I declare! Why, he's taken a good two bushels and more. It'll kill him if he tries it. A dollar and a quarter a bushel. All that for a bit of hickory wood!"

Hawknose John did not appear to notice anybody until he had marched out of the front gate and for several rods along the road. Then he carefully slipped the bag of potatoes down upon the grass, and took a seat beside it. Piney and Kyle and Roxy had all followed him, wondering what he really meant to do; and now the former asked, —

"John, how'll you ever carry that bag to the Reservation?"

"Boy ask too much question. My potatoes now. Aunt Keziah give big bag full. John carry 'em. Wagon come along by and by. Put bag in. Carry home to squaw."

There was a look of something very much like fun upon his dark face as he said all that; and Kyle Wilbur remarked to Piney, —

"He's got a big price for his bow anyhow. Your aunt Keziah isn't sharp enough to make trades with Indians."

"She is with white men, then. I never saw her get beaten so badly before. Anyhow, his little Indians must have something to eat; and it's a prime good bow."

"Will you teach me to shoot?" asked Roxy.

"You may have my old bow. You couldn't do any thing with this one. Wonder where I'll find a good enough string for it?"

"An old fiddle-string would be just the thing," said Kyle, "if you could get one long enough."

"I'll do it. That's so. Nothing else'd be half as good."

There was no use in watching Hawknose John while he waited for his wagon; and it was plain that he had made up his mind not to talk any more with a boy that "asked too much question."

CHAPTER IV.

A GRAND ARRIVAL.

AUNT KEZIAH MERRILL may have been a little vexed at finding how large a price Hawknose John had made her pay for Piney's new bow, but she was not the woman to say a great deal about such a matter. She and his mother admired the bow with him; and the latter hunted up, from an old work-bag, a very strong piece of twine for a bow-string.

"O mother!" exclaimed Piney, as he examined it, "where did you get that? It's splendid."

"I think it's a piece of one of your uncle Liph's old fishing-lines. It's been in my bag ever since he was here last summer."

"I'm glad you never happened to tie up any bundle with it."

"Well, it did seem a little too good for common wrapping-twine."

"There isn't any thing too good to string a bow with. I'm glad I've got so good a lot of arrows."

"The Woodchuck made them for you, didn't he?"

"Maybe he did. I can't just exactly say who made 'em. He never works if he can help it. His wife may have made the arrows, but he came to sell them. That's the way he does with all the berries she picks."

"And then," said Roxy, "Hawknose John makes him take the money home to her."

"So he does," said aunt Keziah. "I'd rather he'd have my potatoes than any other Indian on the Reservation."

There seemed to be some comfort in being over-reached by the right Indian, and she was contented.

Kyle Wilbur had sauntered off to the shore of the lake; and it was not long before Piney joined him, with his new bow all strung and ready for use. He brought with him, also, several long and straight and very well-made arrows. Two of these were particularly admired by Kyle; for they had sharp steel points, instead of mere blunt wooden heads like the others.

"I say, Piney, it looks just as if you'd set in a couple of shoemaker's pegging-awls, largest size you could get," he said, "and then as if you'd gone to work and whittled down the wood all around 'em to fit."

"That's just what I did," said Piney; "but you can't guess, in all day, what I did it for."

"Why, yes, I can. You did it to shoot with, and so they'd stick in when you hit any thing."

"Yes; well, of course that's it; but that isn't all."

"There ain't any thing more about 'em that I can see; but they'll go right in, sure."

"Well, they will. Come on. Get into the boat with me now, and I'll show you."

"Show me what?"

"Just you wait a bit. Sit way astern, and paddle me along. Don't make a bit of noise. Go right across the flats. I'll get into the forward end, and I'll show you."

"Oh, well!" exclaimed Kyle, "guess I understand what you're up to. You're going for pickerel, Indian fashion. I've done it half a dozen times, only I didn't get a thing. You won't either."

"Won't I? I have done it more'n once. Didn't have any such a bow as this is, though."

"I didn't, and I didn't have as good an arrow as you've got. Besides, I can't begin to shoot as well as you can: I ain't strong enough in my arms."

He certainly did not look as if his arms could be equal to those of Piney Hunter; but then, that was probably no fault of his. He would have been well pleased, no doubt, to be every ounce as fat and strong as was his schoolmate and nearest neighbor. As it was, the bigger and stouter the bow might

be, the less would be his chance for doing any thing great with it. Piney himself had frankly told his mother and aunt Keziah that he must do something while he was waiting for uncle Liph and all the rest to get there, or he should "go wild;" and aunt Keziah had replied to him, —

"Well, Piney, Roxy and Chub are about as much as we can attend to. They've both gone wild a'ready. The folks from the city'll get here just as early if you go out and row around on the lake for a while."

So he had taken her advice, and his bow and his arrows, and his new idea, and had gone off to see what he could do with them. He had made Roxy a present of his old bow, and promised to make her some arrows for it some day. It was only about half the size of the new one, and not very strong. She could bend it a little; but it was, after all, a pretty large plaything for a girl of her size.

"I do wish I had some arrows," she said, after he had gone. "I want to shoot some, now."

"I'm just as well pleased you haven't any just now," said aunt Keziah. "I haven't any time to be on the lookout for the windows and looking-glasses."

That was something it might be worth while to think of; but Roxy longed for a whole quiver-full of arrows, just the same.

Meantime, Piney and Kyle floated slowly away towards "the flats." That was a part of the lake where the water was quite shallow. You could see the bottom almost anywhere. In some places it was hardly two feet deep. But the scow was a sort of boat that was just suited to such navigation: she was flat-bottomed, and she could have floated, with any load that could have been put into her, over a good deal shallower water than that. With only those two boys to carry, she needed but a few inches to keep her from "grounding."

Piney Hunter sat in front, with his bow in his hand and his arrow on the string, looking earnestly over into the clear water below as the boat glided gently on. Now and then he made motions to Kyle at the stern to steer in one direction or another, but neither of them spoke aloud. Twice the young bowman let fly his arrow; but each time it was only to pull it back again by a long string tied to the end of it. The second time he was vexed enough to exclaim sharply, —

"Didn't hit him!"

"Guess you're aiming too high," said Kyle. "You've got to shoot way down under 'em. Didn't you know that?"

"Yes, I know that. The water makes 'em look higher up than they really are. Maybe that's it. I don't send it in low enough down."

"That ain't all," said Kyle. "I know. The water makes the arrow glance up a little. I didn't hit the first fish, and I shot at any number of 'em."

"I'll try it on again. Hush, now! There's a big one, — biggest kind. Slow, now, slow."

Whether that pickerel was taking an afternoon nap, or whether he was only watching for flies, and was too lazy to move away for any thing else, there he lay, only a few inches below the surface, until the scow crept slyly along almost over him, and within capital shooting distance.

Piney held his breath for a moment, and then he drew his arrow almost to the head. It seemed to him that it must go away down below the fish, and miss him; but he was determined to try the experiment, and he let fly.

"Twang!" went the bow, and there was hardly a spatter in the water as the arrow darted through it. Then there was instantly a very great spatter—a regular splash—as the stricken pickerel sprang to the surface.

"Hurrah!" shouted Kyle. "You've hit him this time, sure."

"Hurrah!" shouted Piney in his turn. "That's the way the Indians used to do. Hawknose John told me so himself."

"What made you let go of your string, Piney? Now you can't pull him in."

"Why, you couldn't pull him in that way. Don't you see? There's a shingle float at the end of the string on the arrow. He can't swim much with that tagging to him. Oh, but don't I wish I had a landing-net!"

"Or a gaff-spear," said Kyle. "That'd do it. He keeps coming out on top of the water."

"Paddle along after him, Kyle. We'll get him. Isn't he a big fellow, though?"

"A perfect whopper. There, you hit him on the nose. Hit him again."

"That's what I meant to do," said Piney, as he put down the oar he had been striking with. "A little farther, — now I've got him."

He thought he had; and he was reaching over after his fish, when Kyle, who was as much excited as Piney, and perhaps a little more, gave a sudden dig with his paddle, and made the boat swing quickly in the wrong direction. In a second of time the young pickerel-shooter was floundering in the water. He went clean out of sight under the surface; but he came up again sputtering triumphantly, —

"I've got him! It isn't deep. Push along, Kyle, and let me pitch him in. He's only a little stunned, and he's getting ready to flop again."

Piney had grasped the arrow on both sides of the fish, close up to the body. It had gone through him a little behind his shoulders, so that it had been

aimed exactly right instead of too low. Piney pulled it out as he dropped his prize into the boat. The water was about up to his waist just there; and he followed his fish into the scow with no difficulty at all, and with no harm but a complete ducking.

“What a splendid pickerel! Why, Kyle, that fellow must weigh pretty near four pounds.”

“Biggest one anybody’s caught in this lake for ever so long,” said Kyle. “Wouldn’t I like to try my luck just for once!”

“Of course you can some day, — most any time. But just look at me now, and all that company coming to our house. I say, Kyle, isn’t that a carriage there, coming up the south road?”

“Looks like one. Guess it must be your uncle and his folks.”

“Let’s pull for home, then. Oh, dear me! I sha’n’t have time to change my clothes. I don’t care for that, though: I’ve got that big pickerel.”

There he lay on the bottom of the boat; and it was a comfort to a wet boy to only look at him, for he had not yet decided to be quiet and not flop any more. Piney took an oar, and they both rowed their very best. It was not that they had so very far to go, but then the carriage in the road could travel a great deal faster than the scow could in the water; and, when the latter was pulled in at the landing, the former was almost at the gate.

The gate was already wide open; and there by it were Piney Hunter's mother and aunt Keziah, and Roxy and Chub, and even Ann the hired help; that is, Roxy was outside of the gate, Ann and Chub were in it, and the rest were stringing out across the piazza and down the steps, when the carriage halted. One of the farm-hands had been out there for half an hour, waiting to be ready to take care of the baggage and the horses.

"Of course it's only a hired carriage," aunt Keziah had said; "but then, you know, horses must rest after such a drive, and they've got to eat and drink."

All her own horses were well taken care of, as everybody knew; and she was a kindly woman as well as wise.

The carriage drew up in front of the gate, and a boy of about Piney's age instantly sprang down from his seat beside the driver. He was as tall as Piney, and much more nicely dressed; but he was nothing like so plump and rosy. He was hardly down upon the grass before the carriage-door opened, and a tall, smiling-faced gentleman stepped out, just as Roxy began to shout, —

"Uncle Liph! Aunt Sarah! Cousin Bi! Where are Mary and Susie?"

"They are all here," merrily remarked uncle Liph as he helped out a portly, motherly-looking

woman, who at once caught up Roxy in her arms. Then came a young lady who got out without any help, and turned around to look out for the safe landing of a little girl who was half a head taller than Roxy.

That little girl was plainly the visitor aunt Keziah had been especially looking for; and she did not speak a word to any one else until she had said "My little Susie!" half a dozen times, with nobody counted how many kisses. There were kisses and hand-shakings, and a sort of hubbub. So many things were being said, that it was of no sort of use to try and ask or answer any thing just then; but now a deep, strong voice from the carriage exclaimed, —

"Well, am I forgotten?"

"Grandpa! Grandpa!" screamed Roxy. "Oh, how nice! We didn't guess you were coming. Where's grandma? Did she come too?"

"She's gone to Boston, but I've come to see Roxy and Chub."

Even while he was speaking, a very fine-looking old gentleman, with silver-gray hair, came a little slowly out of the carriage. He seemed to be slightly lame in one foot, but otherwise in excellent health and spirits.

"How did you all manage to pack into one carriage?" inquired aunt Keziah.

"Oh! Susie carried me," said grandpa, just as Bi asked, —

"But where is cousin Richard?"

"Piney?" said aunt Keziah. "Oh! he got tired of waiting, and went out on the lake for a row. He'll come."

"There he comes now," shouted Roxy.

"He's comin'," added Chub, "and he's dot a fis'."

"He must have been diving for it, I should say," remarked uncle Liph. "What a looking boy!"

"Bayard," said aunt Sarah, "there's your cousin Richard."

There he was indeed, half out of breath with haste, his loose clothes clinging to him with the wetting they had had, holding his big pickerel by the gills with one hand, while he carried his successful bow and arrows in the other. His face, moreover, had never looked a shade redder than it did at that moment; and his dark eyes were sparkling with fun, and with the pleasure he felt at seeing his friends.

"Piney," said uncle Liph, "you're a trump! But where did you get that pickerel?"

"Shot him with an arrow first, and then Kyle Wilbur tipped me into the lake to catch him. I got him, though."

"So you did, and he's a fine one. — Bayard, my boy, I'd like to see you do a thing like that, clothes or no clothes."

"Bi" looked as if he hardly knew which to shake hands with first, his cousin, or the big fish; but Piney was almost compelled to say to Susie, —

"No, Susie. Hold on. You mustn't hug me now, — not till I'm dry and clean again. Hug Chub for me: he's dry."

Yes; but Chub felt that he had already been hugged enough for that time. He had even escaped from his grandfather; and he was now walking around and around his big brother, staring hard at the pickerel, the bow and the arrows, and the dripping clothes. It was not the first time that that suit had been in the water, and they had never been of the same cut and style with that now worn by cousin "Bi."

Piney cut a somewhat comical figure, perhaps; but his mother blushed with pleasure when she heard cousin Mary Hunter whisper to grandfather and aunt Sarah at the gate, —

"What a really splendid-looking boy he is growing to be!"

She probably did not refer to the wet clothing, or to the bit of eel-grass that still was sticking to one of his shirt-buttons.

CHAPTER V.

THE CURIOSITY-SHOP.

WHEN grandfather Hunter and uncle Liph and the rest came to visit at the farmhouse by the lake they left a home of their own behind them. It was a particularly pleasant and commodious home. The house was large and square, with a front twice as wide as most city houses have room for. In fact, it was not in the great city itself, but out at one end of it, where the houses were not built so closely together. Uncle Liph's house had even a good deal of ground around it, with trees and shrubbery. The outside was handsome enough to satisfy any reasonable person, and was calculated to lead people to expect good things of the inside. When, however, any one got in at the front door, it was easy to discover at once that that house was furnished somewhat differently from the homes of most people. The chairs and tables, indeed, were a good deal like those of other folk, and were nice enough; but somehow not many of them seemed to be very new.

They looked, rather, as if they had been made ever so long ago, and had been taken excellent care of. The great hat-rack in the hall, near the front door, was made of the branching antlers of moose and elk and deer, put together upon a mahogany frame. It was very extraordinary, but it answered exceedingly well to hang hats and coats on. There was a great head of a moose, antlers and all, as natural as life, right in the middle of it.

Over the door leading into the front parlor, on the left of the hall, was a stuffed eagle with wide-spread wings; and right opposite him, over another door that led into a reading-room, was a large white owl, beautifully stuffed, and sitting so still as to show that he sat in no fear at all of the eagle.

The farther you might choose to go, in wandering around that house, the more you would be sure to see of queer and unusual things and matters which seemed to call for some sort of explanation.

A suit of ancient armor, which almost seemed to have a man in it, stood leaning upon a spear at the back-parlor entrance; but nobody had ever seen the iron warrior stop people as they were going in or coming out.

There was a very good explanation of it all. Uncle Liph was what is called an "antiquarian;" and so, after his own peculiar fashion, was Grandfather Hunter. That is, they were fond of knowing

about the ways and doings of people who lived in the old times, ever so long ago. They were curious as to how those people lived and worked, and talked and dressed, and especially how they made war, and what kinds of weapons they used in their hunting and their fighting.

So, too, they liked old-time furniture, if it were good and serviceable, much better than new furniture ; and once, when a man asked uncle Liph what there was "ancient" about a pair of deer-horns, he said, —

"Ancient? Why, the oldest deer in the world wore a pair. They wore them in Noah's ark. There's nothing modern about horns."

That summer afternoon, at the time when Piney Hunter was shooting his big pickerel, the great square house in the edge of the city had an empty and deserted look ; but it was not at all empty, and it was not entirely deserted. All the queer old things of every kind were there ; and uncle Liph would never have dreamed of going away and leaving his carefully gathered treasures to take care of themselves, — no, not for so much as one single night. He had therefore said to his trusty hired man, Terence McGonegal, —

"Now, Terry, my boy, you must keep a sharp lookout. I don't want to find that my big eagle flew away while I was gone." And Terry had calmly responded, —

“’Dade, yer honor, it’s a quiet sort of bird he is. I’ve no fear of him at all, sor. But I’ll not slape in the librarhy, wid all thim owld conthraptions round me. Sure an’ they’d make me dhrame of owld Brian Boru and the Danes.”

“You needn’t sleep at all, Terry. It isn’t that I’m afraid of. If you and Fanny will only keep awake all the time I’m gone, the house won’t be run away with.”

“I’ll answer for the house, yer honor; and I pity the man that thries to run away wid Fanny.”

Fanny was the cook; and if any one had but looked at her that afternoon, standing in the library with Terry while he talked to her about uncle Liph’s treasures, he would also have been ready to pity the man who should have to carry her very far. Hawk-nose John’s bag of potatoes was nothing at all to such a load as Fanny the cook would have been. Still, if she was remarkably tall and stout, she was by no means inclined to be lazy; and that, too, might have made it yet more difficult to steal her out of the house. It was really surprising, at times, to see how rapidly she moved around, especially when she was in the kitchen, and it was nearly time for dinner to be put upon the table. Just now she was standing still enough. She had seen all that antiquarian show before, a great many times; but it was a sort of treat to be there, with Terry for show-

man, and to have the whole affair to themselves for all the world as if they owned it.

"They wore thim, did they?" she asked, pointing to some pieces of old armor that hung against a book-case.

"Is it did they wear thim? What else, then? Sure, an' it was all the clothes they had in thim days."

"I'm glad I didn't live in thim days, then. How'd you like it yourself, Mr. Terence McGonegal, to have a blacksmith for a tailor? Did they nail 'em on?"

"Was they horses?" asked Terry scornfully. "No, indade! Thim iron clothes was all put together wid rivets and bolts and screws, and then the men that was to wear 'em crept into 'em and stood up."

"Was that it? And what did the women wear, I'd like to know? Was their clothes made of tin?"

"Ye'd betther ask Misther Hoonter himself about that. Mebbe they did; but I'm thinking they didn't cost so much tin to clothe 'em then as they do now."

"Sure, an' I've earned and paid for all that's on me, Mr. McGonegal."

Terence and Fanny had a great deal more to see and say; for uncle Liph's library was a very large

room with many things in it. Piney Hunter had been dreaming of it during the whole past year, and longing for just such a chance at it as Fanny and Terence were blessed with that summer day. He was almost ready to envy his cousin Bayard the privilege he enjoyed, all the while, of going in when ever he chose to look into any of those wonderful books of all sorts of pictures, and at all those marvellous curiosities. He had dreamed of them when he was wide awake, a good deal ; and, what was even more remarkable for so very healthy and sound-sleeping a boy, he had actually dreamed of them when he was asleep.

As soon as the new-comers at the farm could be led into the house, and their baggage had been carried up to their rooms, Piney set about the good work of making himself "look nice" again. He and Bi were to room together, and they went up stairs at once. The city boy's clothes were not wet ; but, in his opinion, they were dusty enough to need changing almost as badly as did Piney's. All the while they were busy at their changes, Piney kept up a steady stream of questions about the "antiquarian collection."

"Is it all there yet?"

"All of it. Father keeps all he gets, if he makes up his mind that it's worth keeping. Sometimes he has things sent to him that don't turn out to be just

what they seemed to be. He's found ever so many new things, though, since you were there."

"New things?"

"Well, yes; I mean old things, — old things that he didn't have before. He had ever so many sent over to him from Europe. I guess you'd like to see some of them."

"From Europe!" exclaimed Piney, with deep respect in his voice. "Armor? shields and swords and helmets, and all that?"

"All kinds of weapons. Grandfather tried to make me believe one of the biggest swords was the one David killed Goliath with. If I hadn't known better" —

"Well, how did you know? You wasn't there."

"Wasn't where?"

"There when David killed Goliath."

"No, nor that sword wasn't either; but it was big enough. I found out all about it. It was an old German sword, — very old. They had to swing it with both hands. But that wasn't all. I'll tell you what grandfather did."

"What did he do?"

"He made a sling — a big one — like what he said David must have used. Maybe it was, but I don't believe you or I could sling a stone with it."

"Bi, just you show me how that sling was made.

I'll make one like it, and we'll practise with it at a mark. They had bows and arrows too."

"Yes; but I guess they didn't go a-fishing with 'em."

"How do you know they didn't?"

"Never heard of it."

"Our Indians did, then. Old Hawknose John told me."

"And that's the way you killed your big pickerel? Who is Hawknose John?"

"He's an Onondaga Indian from the Reservation. He's a kind of chief. He made my bow."

"Did he? How much did you you pay him for it?"

"Pay him? Oh, he gave it to me; that is, he gave it Indian fashion,—he gave me the bow, and then he made aunt Keziah make him a present of a sack of potatoes."

Piney told the whole story, and Bi laughed; but he said, —

"He isn't much like the Indian chiefs Cooper tells about in his novels."

"I don't know about that. He's a good sort of an Indian. In those days they'd have come and helped themselves to all the potatoes in the bin, without so much as asking."

"No, indeed; I guess they wouldn't," said Bayard indignantly. "The Indian chiefs were like the old

knights I've been reading about ; only they didn't wear armor, or ride horses."

"I guess they were," said Piney. "I've been reading a good deal about them too. Aunt Keziah says all those old knights were great thieves : they stole every thing they could lay their hands on. She knows."

"Oh, well !" said Bi, "that was in war."

"Yes, I guess it was ; and they called it war all the time. It was just so with the Indians. I'll tell you what I think, Bi."

"What's that ?"

"The old knights that wore armor, and the old Indian chiefs that didn't have any to wear, were a kind of pickerel."

"Pickerel ? What do you mean ?"

"Why, don't you know ? That's a fish that gets his living by eating up all the smaller fish that come in his way. Aunt Keziah says, that, every time I catch a pickerel, I give ten thousand little fish a better chance to grow up and get an education."

"Then, that big one you shot must have swallowed ever so many."

"Piles of 'em. Now he'll be eaten in his turn. Serves him right."

"If he'd only had armor on, you'd never have killed him."

"Perhaps not. I might have stunned him with a

sling and a stone, as David did Goliath, and then cut his head off."

"Not in the water," said Bi.

Just then they heard aunt Sarah, at the kitchen door below, exclaiming, —

"Keziah, where are the children?"

"Roxy took them out on the lawn."

"On the lawn? I do not see them. O Keziah, they are all out there in the boat! All of them, — Roxy and Susie and Chub."

"Just like her!" exclaimed aunt Keziah, as she ran to the foot of the stairs; and then she called, —

"Piney! Piney! Hurry down to the lake. The children are all out in the boat."

"What can they be doing?" asked Bayard of Piney.

"Doing? Wait a moment."

"Well, what are you doing?"

"Going for my old clothes. I don't want to wet a fresh lot. These are my Sunday best."

"You're getting 'em off double-quick, anyhow," said Bi; and that was precisely what Piney Hunter was doing.

CHAPTER VI.

PINEY TO THE RESCUE!

THE first thing aunt Sarah had done, on getting to her room, had been to give Susie's very eager but somewhat dusty little face a good washing. It was not easy to do any more for her in the way of "fixing up," as she called it, with Roxy and Chub in the room, in such a fever to show their city cousin the whole country at once.

"Roxy," said Susie, as she got her mouth away from under the towel, "do aunt Lizzie and aunt Keziah make you always keep your face clean?"

"No, I guess they don't," said Roxy. "It's always clean. I wash it my own self. I'll show you. It never gets very dirty, 'cept when I go for berries."

Are there lots of berries?"

"Yes, sometimes. Berry-stains don't come off easy,—not even with soap. Won't we pick 'em though!"

"Mother" said Susie, "may I?"

"Of course you may. You may get them on your face and hands too, but you must be careful of your dress and your apron."

"That's just what aunt Keziah says to me," remarked Roxy, with a very wise face. "Berries are very bad for aprons."

"I like berries," said Chub. "Roxy put salt in 'em."

"Did Roxy salt your berries for you?" laughed aunt Sarah.

"So I did," said Roxy; "but then the salt-box and the sugar-box are just alike. You can't tell 'em apart unless you taste 'em."

"Didn't you taste and see?"

"No, I didn't; and I put on ever so much. Then I had to go and pick some more berries before I had any breakfast."

"I declare! I must make your mother tell me about that. — Now, Susie, you may go. Keep out of mischief. You may play till tea-time."

"Won't that be splendid!" exclaimed Susie. "Roxy, your folks don't have tea till it's ever so late, do they?"

"No, they don't," said Roxy; "but then, when it's 'most time, I'll have to come in and help aunt Keziah and Ann. There's a good many people to look out for, now you've all come."

Aunt Sarah laughed aloud as Roxy said that; and

she hurried them out of the room, with another caution about getting into mischief. Roxy thought her aunt must know very little about the country, or she would never have said that. She was entirely sure that Susie would be perfectly safe with her and Chub; and she led them down-stairs, and out upon the lawn.

"That's our lawn," she said proudly, as she pointed all over it. "That's where we play croquet. We had two cows there, and a calf, once. The calf bunted me right over on my back. Kyle Wilbur ran after him 'most down to the lake, and pounded him; but aunt Keziah said it served me right."

"Why, it was dreadful!" exclaimed Susie. "He might have bit you"

"No: calves don't bite. I tickled his nose with a straw, to see if he could laugh. That's what he bunted me down for. Isn't it beautiful grass?"

"Be-a-u-tiful!"

"And there's a whole tubful of pinies around in front of the piazza; and there's roses and s'ringa flowers, and myrtle, and violets, and pansies, and dahlias, and tiger-lilies, and — and — and there's the lake, too. Susie, let's all go down and see the boat."

Roxy was sure she would remember the names of all the other flowers, after a while; but some of them did not come to her mind at once. It was

easier to show the lake and the boat, to begin with ; and Susie had been looking in that direction even while Roxy pointed at the tub of peonies. She was in ecstasies about the boat the moment they reached the landing.

"It's a beautiful boat," she said ; "and it swims splendidly."

"That's what it's made for," said Roxy. "Piney and Kyle Wilbur go a-fishing in it everywhere. You can't tip it over."

"Won't it tip at all?"

"No : it's a real strong good boat."

"It's Piney's boat," said Chub.

Roxy had stooped, and pulled upon the chain ; and now she brought the scow close to the edge of the wooden platform which aunt Keziah had had built for a landing. Chub at once clambered in ; for he had sailed in that boat a number of times, and was not in the least afraid of any thing it might do. Susie wished ever so much that she dared follow him ; but she hesitated until Roxy shouted, —

"Jump right in, Susie. I'll row you all over the lake."

Susie was aware that she was only a city-girl, and she thought it must be all right if Roxy said so ; for the lake and the boat seemed to belong to the farmhouse as much as any other part of it. Besides, Roxy was a good deal younger, — more than two

whole years, — and she did not exactly like to seem to be timid. Her pride helped her; and she stepped cautiously in, and sat carefully down upon one of the middle seats.

“There’s some water in the bottom of the boat!” she exclaimed.

“Oh!” said Roxy, “that’s nothing. It won’t do to let the boat get too dry. Piney told me so. He lets it leak a little all the while.”

Roxy was busy with the chain, which was merely hooked to a staple in a stout post; and now she got it loose. She seated herself very complacently at that end, and gave the hitching-post a push that sent the scow away from the landing handsomely.

“O Roxy, we’re all a-floating!”

“Of course we are,” said Roxy, with a tone of perfect confidence. “Now I must take the oars, and I’ll row you. I can row ’most as well as Piney can.”

“But where are the oars?” asked Susie. “I can’t see any.”

“The oars? Why, yes; I’d like to know. O cousin Susie! There they are, — up there on the bank beyond the landing.”

“You can’t row without oars.”

“Somebody’s gone and took them out of the boat.”

That was exactly the truth of the matter. Kyle

Wilbur had done it when he and Piney came back with their big pickerel. Now the whole party were quite a little distance from the shore; and Susie began to wish she never had seen either the lake itself, or the beautiful old scow.

“O Roxy! Do you think we shall be drowned?”

“No, indeed. Not so long as we stay in the boat. It’s only people that tumble into the water that ever get drowned. Piney says nobody’ll ever be drowned if they’ll keep out of the water.”

“I wish Piney were here.”

“Oh! he’ll come. Don’t you be afraid: I ain’t.”

“I ain’t afraid,” said Chub. “It’s Piney’s boat. He boated me ’way ac’oss the lake once.”

With that, Chub leaned over the gunwale of the scow in a way that made his sister catch hold of his frock, and exclaim, —

“Chub! Chub! You must sit still. If you ain’t careful, you’ll make the boat rock, and scare Susie.”

It was just at that moment that Piney heard aunt Keziah calling to him from the foot of the stairs. He understood the whole affair in a twinkling, after one glance through his window; and it was wonderful how quickly he was out upon the grass, with nothing on him but a dry shirt and a wet pair of trousers.

“Won’t you hurt your feet?” asked Bi, as he followed him.

“Hurt 'em? No, of course not,—not on this grass. You wouldn't have me put on shoes and stockings to swim in, would you?”

“I should say not. Do you think you'll have to swim?”

“Guess I will. Come on, Bi.”

By this time aunt Keziah, with Piney's mother and Susie's, and cousin Mary, and even grandfather Hunter and uncle Liph, were all hurrying down towards the boat-landing.

“Oh, those children!” exclaimed aunt Sarah. “What can we do! What will become of them?”

The scow was rapidly drifting out into the lake, at all events, driven by a light wind that blew off shore; and there was no other boat to be had.

“Is the water very deep?” asked uncle Liph anxiously.

“It's pretty deep around here,” replied aunt Keziah; and then she shouted to the children,—

“Sit still, all of you! Sit still!”

Susie was almost ready to cry when she saw her mother and the rest come running down to the shore; and she sat as still as a mouse. Chub, however, took a different view of the matter, and was playing over the side of the boat with his new straw hat in the water; and Roxy had not lost an inch of her courage and confidence. She was a very little paler than common; but she said several times,—

"It's all right, Susie. This isn't any thing. Piney's coming."

"I wish he'd come," whimpered poor Susie; for she understood that the grown-up people were getting frightened about them, although she could not clearly see that they were in immediate danger.

Piney was coming, with Bi close behind him. He came, the last three or four rods, on a sharp run; and he chuckled with delight as he sprang from the landing into the warm, clear, splashing water.

"It's only a good swim, uncle Liph," he shouted, as he struck out vigorously. "I'll tow them all right in. It's just fun."

"That's all it is to him," said aunt Keziah proudly. "He can swim across the lake."

"Do you hear that, Bayard?" said his mother. "You can swim, but I'm afraid Richard could beat you. You must practise."

"He can practise every day," said Bi. "There's no lake at our house."

"And we can't afford to have one made," remarked his father. "How that youngster does go through the water! I declare!"

"Piney's comin'," laughed Chub, in great glee. "He's s'immin'. See Piney s'im!"

"O Roxy!" exclaimed Susie. "He won't be drowned, will he?"

"No, indeed he won't," said Roxy. "Piney

learned to swim ever so long ago, — before he ever went into the water. He won't be drowned."

There was reason to doubt a part of that assertion ; but Roxy's confidence in her big brother was almost unbounded, and her little face grew serene and smiling as he came nearer and nearer.

"O Piney !" she said, "why didn't you bring the oars ? Then I could have rowed the boat."

"Oh !" replied Piney, "you can row almost as well without them. Sit still, all of you. I'll take you safe ashore."

It was easy enough to turn the head of the scow towards the landing, and to shove her along over the water. Even Susie began to think it was a very nice piece of fun, and Chub laughed and shouted at the top of his voice. As for Roxy, a sober thought began to creep into her mind as to what she should say to her mother and aunt Keziah ; and she did not utter a word until they reached the landing.

"Here they are," said Piney, as he shoved the scow up to its post, and hooked the chain to the staple. "I guess I'd better put the padlock on, so she'll stay at home."

"I'll never do it again," said Roxy. "I just wanted to teach Susie how to row the boat."

"And so you didn't take any oars," said grandfather Hunter.

Piney's mother caught Chub in her arms, and aunt Sarah was hugging Susie; and poor Roxy looked so crestfallen and sorry, that aunt Keziah said to her, —

“Come, dear, get out of the boat. You're a naughty girl, but I won't scold you. You and Susie may go to the garden, and pick some strawberries for supper. Ain't you glad Piney was at home?”

“Oh, well, aunt Keziah, Piney always comes just in time!”

“After all,” said uncle Liph, “it's a good sort of lesson. Bayard, you must go in swimming every day while you're here. I'd like to see you out-swim Richard.”

“He'll never learn with his clothes on,” said Piney merrily. “Now I guess I'll go and change mine. It's the best kind of fun though.”

“Yes,” said Bi doubtfully; “but you're about the wettest boy ever I saw.”

CHAPTER VII.

KYLE WILBUR.

PINEY hurried away into the house to put on his other clothes, and Roxy's mother scolded her a little before she let her go with Susie and aunt Keziah to the kitchen after their strawberry-baskets.

Grandfather Hunter was pretty tired after his long ride, especially as he had hurried a good deal, for him, when he heard the outcry about the children: so he and uncle Liph went out and sat down upon the front piazza. As for aunt Sarah and Mary, they set out for a walk along the lake-shore, and carried Chub with them; so that Bayard was left alone for a little while. He stood for a few minutes, looking at the boat. Then he threw a stone as far as he could into the water, and said to himself, —

“I wonder how far cousin Richard could throw a stone; that is, without a sling, or any thing like that. There isn't any chance to throw stones in

the city, no more than there is to swim. They haven't got every thing out here though."

Then he looked all over himself. There was no denying that he was a much better-dressed and neater-looking boy than Piney Hunter; considering, especially, also the fact that he was entirely dry from head to foot. It is not easy for any boy to give up that another boy is really his superior in any way, and Bayard Hunter had not been used to having a small opinion of himself. He turned away from the shore, and sauntered across the lawn.

"It's a pretty place," he said; "but our house is ever so much bigger. We have trees too, and some of them are as big as some of these. What a heap of peonies! Aunt Keziah called them 'pinies.' I wouldn't care to be as red in the face and as fat as cousin Richard. I don't believe he can talk French, or play the piano. He can swim, but I'm ready for college in every thing but Greek. I don't believe he ever saw a Greek book, or a Latin one either. I'll swim though, every chance I get; and I'll catch pickerel. There'll be good fun in all that, but a fellow can't learn much out in a country place like this."

Bayard did not know, or he may have forgotten, that there was an academy at the village, only a mile and a half away, and that the people of Parable Centre believed their academy to be "a truly great

institution." If he had known all that, he might not have felt so sure of being so far ahead of his cousin in all those things. It was very likely, however, that he was at least half way right; and he comforted himself in that way as he leaned over the front gate, and looked down the road. There was a boy coming along just then from the other way; and the first that Bayard knew of it was, —

"Hullo!"

"Hullo!" said Bayard, as he turned around and looked at the new-comer; and he could not help saying to himself, "If cousin Richard is too fat, this fellow's as thin as a chicken. What a peaked face!"

"I say, are you Piney Hunter's cousin from the city?"

"Yes. My name is Bayard Hunter. Richard is my cousin."

"Yes, that's his name. Only we all call him Piney. Is that the kind of hat they wear in the city?"

"Well, yes: it's my hat."

"I guessed it was. I'm Kyle Wilbur. I live in that house over yonder. Our farm jines onto aunt Keziah's. Have you heard Piney speak his piece?"

"Speak his piece?"

"Yes; for the 'cademy exhibition. If he doesn't forget the last half of it, he'll do it up tip-top.

Don't you wish you was as good-lookin' a feller as he is?"

"Call him good-looking?"

"I'd say so. I'd give any thing to weigh what he does. Did you see the pickerel he killed?"

"With his bow and arrow? Yes, I saw that."

"It's a big one, isn't it? Tell you what! I helped him do that. I paddled the boat. You ought to have seen him go over in. But he never let go of that pickerel. He'd have got away from a feller like you in a jiffy."

"Could you have caught him?"

"Course I could, if I'd have shot him, and got a good hold on him. That's the trouble. Piney always seems to get a good hold when he goes for any thing."

"Does he?" asked Bayard.

"Yes, he does. How long be you and your folks going to stay here?"

"Oh! I don't know. A good while."

"Hope you will. Piney's just the kind of feller I'd like to visit with, specially if I'd been brought up in the city, and didn't know much. I'll see you ag'in. I'm going to the village now. If you go after Piney's cows with him, you just look sharp after that brindled heifer of his'n. She doesn't take kindly to strangers."

So saying, Kyle Wilbur shut his mouth hard, as

if to keep himself by main strength from talking any more, and hurried away down the road. Bi stood and watched him for a moment; but just then he heard a smothered laugh behind him, and he turned quickly around.

"Father!" he exclaimed, "did you ever hear anybody talk like that?"

"Not exactly, I must say. But I am inclined to think he is right in having a good opinion of your cousin Richard. He is a brave young fellow."

"Well, yes, father; but there wasn't any thing so wonderfully brave in swimming for that boat."

"No, and he did not think there was; but he was ready."

"Yes, he'd got himself all wet through before."

"I didn't mean that exactly."

"I'd have been ready, too, if I were such a swimmer as he is."

"Then you must be. I want you to be ready for any thing. The man you were named after, the Chevalier Bayard, was always ready."

"Yes, father; and I'm glad I was named after such a man, and not after a tubful of big red flowers like those."

"Only a nickname, my son. I persuaded your cousin's father to name him after Richard, the lion-hearted king of England. I must say I hardly thought I should ever hear him called Piney."

"There he comes now. He looks a good deal better with a suit of dry clothes on."

So he did, but he did not seem to care much about it; and it was not long before he was giving his city cousin a pull in the old scow out upon the lake.

"We won't forget to put the oars in," he said, as they pushed away from the landing. "There isn't anybody handy to swim out after us. It's too near tea-time, or we might try for some fish. Never mind, we'll have plenty of that while you're here."

"Next week?"

"Well, yes; some next week, and more the week after. School doesn't close till a week from to-day. It'll be examination next Friday. You know what that is, I suppose."

"Guess I do. What are you to be examined in?"

Piney told him; and Bi's respect for his country cousin rose a good deal before they finished their mutual account of the books they were at work on.

Still, it was comforting to Bi to find that he was right about being "ahead." There was more, of a great many things, to be had "ready made" in the city than in the country. All of Piney's advantage over Bi was likely to be in such things as were not taught at the academy.

The supper-hour came, and the boys were back

on shore in good time for that. Roxy and Susie were also on hand, after harvesting the necessary strawberries. They were hardly seated before Roxy remarked, —

“O aunt Keziah! I’ve got something real dreadful to tell.”

“What is it, Roxy?”

“It’s a hornets’-nest, — a real big one. Only think of it!”

“That’s so,” said Piney. “I saw it. It’s in the apple-tree at the farther end of the garden. It’s the biggest kind of a hanging nest.”

“I’m glad they’ve never stung any of you,” said his mother. “Is it a very large one?”

“Yes, it’s large; but nobody ever goes up there, and they haven’t been disturbed to make ’em savage. What was you there for, Roxy?”

“Well, I wanted to show Susie that apples grew on big trees.”

“I guess I knew that before,” said Susie indignantly; “but Roxy said some of our berries we were picking were as big as apples.”

“So they were, almost,” said Roxy, — “’most as big as some of the apples on that old tree. But there weren’t any apples there as big as that hornet’s-nest.”

“How did you know it was a hornet’s-nest?” asked uncle Liph.

"Oh! Piney showed me one once. He shot it, too, with his gun. I wish he'd shoot this one."

"With his bow and arrows?" asked grandfather Hunter.

"Yes, or with his gun. Didn't you know Piney had a gun? It shoots off with real powder."

"How is that, Richard?" said his grandfather. "Is that the gun I gave you?"

"Yes, sir; but I guess I won't shoot those yellow-jackets with it."

"What will you do with them?"

"Let 'em alone, unless they get troublesome. I want to get the nest whole. It's a splendid one."

"I see, I see," said his grandfather. "Do it if you can. Get the nest down without breaking it, and send it to me."

"That's what I meant to do."

"I'd as lief have it as a big pair of deer-horns, or almost any thing else, if it's a fine specimen. But you must look out and not let them sting you."

"I won't give 'em a chance if I can help it; but Roxy and Susie had better keep away from that tree."

"Roxy," said aunt Keziah, "do you hear that?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Roxy; "but if Piney doesn't shoot the hornets, they won't let him have the nest."

"He'd better shoot fish," said uncle Liph, who

was eating one of those which Piney and Kyle had caught in the morning. "When are we to have his big pickerel?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Roxy, "aunt Keziah said we were to have that for breakfast; only it won't be enough to go round, and we've saved some of the little fish to go with it. You are to eat the pickerel."

"What, the whole of him?"

"No, sir: his head's been cut off."

"And 'oo mustn't choke 'ooself with the bones," added Chub.

"They might choke me, eh? Well, I'll look out for that. — What are you going to do after supper, Richard, — you and Bi?"

"Go for the cows, sir."

"Shall I go with him, father?" asked Bayard. "I'm not too tired."

"Yes: only remember what Kyle Wilbur said to you about the brindled heifer."

"Humph!" grumbled Bi. "I don't suppose I'm likely to be scared to death by any cow."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HEROIC HEIFER.

AWAY back, behind the farmhouse and beyond all the barns and the hay-ricks, there were woods and rocks. Through the back gate of the barnyard, and up the hillside, was a sort of narrow lane running along the edge of the woods, with a fence on each side of it until it turned up and went over the hill. There it opened into a great green pasture-lot, which spread away over roll after roll, till it went down a long slope to the bank of the little river which connected the lakes. It was all good enough pasture-land, as Piney told Bi; but there were great boulders of rock scattered here and there in many directions, and these were in the way of its doing quite so well for corn or potatoes.

The sun was yet more than half an hour high when, right away after supper, the two boys set out after the cows. It was Piney's regular business; but it was all new to Bi, and he enjoyed it more than he would have been willing to say to anybody.

The long, narrow lane was not kept up at all like a city street. Just back of the barnyard it was lined with "choke-cherry trees" for several rods. None of these were very large, — hardly more than good tall bushes. Beyond that there were some sumach-bushes, with their brilliant red ornaments. Burdocks and big bull-thistles grew everywhere; and Piney pointed out milk-weed and scoke-root, and a dozen other plants. He seemed to know them all, and what some of them were good for.

"They don't do any harm in the lane," he said; "but they're a great bother in some other parts of the farm."

"Can't you kill 'em out?" asked Bi.

"They don't die easy somehow. If you killed them all this year, they'd come up again in the same places next spring, just as if nothing'd happened to 'em."

"What sort of tree is that?"

"Don't you know? Why, that's a chestnut. It bears heavy too. When frost comes that tree'll be worth something. Do you see that hole right there near the big root?"

"Yes, I see it. What's it there for?"

"What's it for? Why, Bi, that's a woodchuck's hole. He's lived there for ever so long."

"Can't you catch him?"

"Well, maybe I could; but I don't want to. He's

been there so long, you know. Aunt Keziah says he's a kind of old neighbor."

"Don't you ever catch any thing around here? Or don't you ever shoot any thing?"

"Of course we do, but not at this time o' year. In the fall those woods'll just be full of squirrels if it's a good year for nuts. There are quails too, plenty of 'em, and partridges. Then, in the winter we get rabbits almost anywhere. It's a good place for 'em down in the marsh, along the south end of the lake, when it's frozen, and there's snow enough to track 'em. All you want then is a dog, and you're sure to pin 'em."

"Are there any deer?"

"Not one, ever. They were all killed off long ago. So were the wolves and bears and wildcats. Now and then there's a fox, and there's sure to be plenty of skunks around if you keep chickens."

"Do they steal your chickens?"

"Yes; and they steal eggs. So do the minks. There are mushrats in the lake and in the river. Now and then there's a weasel."

"Why, Piney, I thought all the wild animals were gone."

"Gone? Well, all the big ones are, — that's so. The rest ain't. Look! There's a red squirrel, — there, on the fence. And there's a chipmunk."

"I see him. He looks like a kind of little squirrel."

"So he is. Some folks call 'em ground-squirrels. So they call the woodchucks 'ground-hogs' too."

"Do they look like a hog?"

"Not a bit, — no more'n a 'coon does. 'Coons are scarce around here. The old folks say there used to be plenty of 'em."

"Well, but about the birds?"

"Birds? I don't know 'bout them. They kind o' come and go. In the spring and fall that lake of ours is sometimes just black with ducks and geese. I've shot any number of 'em, — brant too."

"Wouldn't I like to be here then!"

"I wish you'd come. We could go squirrel-hunting, too, in the fall. Grandfather gave me a splendid double-barrelled gun a year ago. It beats any thing else round here."

"I could get one just like it in the city," said Bi positively.

"Of course you could. Hullo! What's the matter with the cows?"

They had walked along as they talked until they were well past the woods, and they had stopped a score of times to look at things; but just now they were close by the bars that opened into the pasture. Some of the cows were in sight; but, instead of quietly feeding, they were beginning to move around, and even to trot hurriedly along towards the bars.

“Co’ boss! Co’ boss! Co’ boss!” shouted Piney at the top of his voice, as he let down the bars.

“Do they always come when you call?” asked Bi.

“Patty does, and so does Lady Washington; and the rest follow them. There they come. Where’s Patty? There comes the old Lady. I declare!”

“What’s the matter?”

“Matter? Why, it’s Bill Young’s yellow dog. He just loves to worry cows. I believe he’s a sheep-killer too. I’ll give him a charge of buckshot some day if he doesn’t keep out of our pasture. Just see him now!”

Some half a dozen cows were coming rather hastily along the hillside towards the bars, but two more in the rear were moving more deliberately.

“Come on, Bi,” said Piney, as he started forward. “Patty has turned on him. She never ran from a dog in her life, nor from any thing else. She is my pet heifer: I raised her from a calf. She will follow me anywhere.”

Piney did not add, as he might have done, that he was the only living being of her acquaintance to whom the “brindled heifer” did not sometimes show signs of her very uncertain temper. She was decidedly a cow by no means to be trifled with. It may have been, indeed, that one reason why Lady Washington herself—the best and most peaceful of milkers—walked along now so composedly, was

because of her confidence in Patty. A noble-looking cow was the "Lady," with a mild, motherly face, and with a dignified manner of marching, as if she were aware of her value, and that her owner would not trade her for any four other cows in the whole valley.

Piney and Bi hurried forward.

"Hush!" said Piney. "Keep still. Let's see what he'll do. He's trying to dodge past Patty."

A big, ungainly, mongrel sort of dog was that of Bill Young. Nobody in the world would have given ten cents for him, but he was just the kind of dog to make trouble. He was barking furiously at the brindled heifer; and she was facing him with her head down, and with her sharp black horns moving to and fro in a very menacing and dangerous-looking way.

"I wouldn't care to have her hook me," remarked Bi.

"That dog won't either if she gets a fair chance at him. There!"

The yellow dog had made a sudden jump and a rush, as if he meant to make a charge on the other cows, especially the Lady; but Patty was too quick for him. Bi Hunter had never imagined that any cow on earth could be so quick as that. Her horns did not strike the yellow dog with their points, or it would have been very bad indeed for him: they only passed under him as he made his jump.

What a toss that was! For Patty made it with all her will. Up, up went her head, and the next instant the yellow dog was flying through the air away over the back of the brindled heifer. He fell among a clump of huckleberry-bushes just as Patty wheeled around as if she meant to look for him. Perhaps he would have been worse hurt if the huckleberry-bushes had not broken his fall; but, the moment he was on his feet again, he ran as if for his life, yelping piteously. Bi sent after him a stone he had picked up, but the dog was running too fast for even Piney to have made a good throw at him. Still the stone helped Bi to express his feelings, and to show which side of that fight he was on.

Piney hardly looked after the defeated dog; but he walked up to Patty, exclaiming, —

“So! So, Patty! You got him. You’re the cow for me. Come, now, stop shaking your head: he’s gone.”

Patty answered him with a kind of subdued bellow, which said a good deal for her state of mind. She was evidently quite ready for another dog, and did not care a wisp of hay how soon he should come to be tossed. Still she submitted to be patted and praised by her young master, and even allowed Bi himself to make her acquaintance after a fashion. He certainly complimented her warmly, and she

would have been a very ungrateful cow to have shaken her tapering horns at him.

The brindled heifer was a much more slender and graceful creature than Lady Washington; but, as Piney explained, —

“She’s nothing like so good a milker. Aunt Keziah’d have sold her long ago if she hadn’t been a kind of pet.”

“And then, too,” said Bi, “she’s wonderfully good for stray dogs.”

“I guess that dog doesn’t think so. I wish Bill Young had seen him fly. — Come, Patty! The Lady’s at the bars. All the rest are half way to the barn.”

Patty was a brisk walker, and she soon caught up with Lady Washington; but nothing else happened until they were all safe in the barnyard.

The sun was down, and it would soon be dark; but all those cows were to be milked. Ann and one of the hired men were waiting to attend to that business; and there, too, were Roxy and Susie and Chub.

“I won’t milk this time, Susie,” said Roxy. “I’ll stand here with you, and show you how they do it.”

“Do you ever milk the cows?”

“Oh, yes! I milked one once, but I didn’t get any milk.”

"Not a bit? didn't you?"

"Not a bit. Ann said one reason was because that cow had been milked a'ready."

"Does she know all about cows?"

"Guess she does. She's milking Lady Washington now. That's the biggest milkpail we've got."

"Aunt Keziah said we were to have all the milk we wanted, after they brought it in."

"Just as much as we can drink. You don't have any cows in the city, do you?"

"No, but the milkman comes."

"Does he bring it in a pail?"

"No, in a wagon. He comes early in the morning, before we're up."

"Is it real milk?"

"Yes, father says so; that is, he said he guessed there was milk in it."

"Ours is real milk, 'cause we've got the real cows to milk it from. They're all real."

So they were; but now the hired man was trying to get Patty to stand still for him, and he was not succeeding very well. He was patient, and at last the brindled heifer quieted her angry mind a little. The pail under her was filling rapidly, when Roxy said to Susie, —

"That's Piney's pet heifer. She does 'most any thing he wants her to. She likes me too. Just see me speak to her."

She tripped forward, and put her little hand on Patty's neck, saying, —

“Pretty Patty! Good cow! Nice cow!”

It was affectionately meant; but Patty not only shook her head in an unpleasant sort of way, she struck out vigorously with her hind-feet.

Before Roxy could so much as jump back and scream, the hired man was rolling upon the ground, with a shower of new milk flying all over him. Patty had given the milk-pail one kick, and the milking-stool another; but nobody was hurt.

“Piney,” asked Bi, “do you s’pose she took him for a dog?”

“Guess not,” said Piney. “I ought to have milked her myself to-night. Sometimes she won’t stand still for anybody else.”

“O Roxy!” exclaimed Susie. “Are you hurt?”

“No,” said Roxy, “I ain’t hurt a bit; but she’s kicked over the milk.”

“It’s all your fault,” said Ann. “If you’d have let her alone, she’d never have stirred.”

“I just touched her.”

“Come, Roxy,” said Piney, “you and Susie and Chub had better come in with Bi and me.”

“What for, Piney?”

“Oh, it’s time! Besides, we can’t have any more pails kicked over. The cows are cross to-night.”

“Do take ’em in!” said Ann.

“Yes, Roxy,” said Susie, “come. I don’t like their horns a bit.”

Chub had kept very still ever since he came into the barnyard. He had seen cows milked often enough ; and not only was he tired, but he knew that the best part of the whole business—the milk-drinking—would come to pass in the house.

“New milk is good, that’s a fact,” strongly remarked Bayard Hunter, a little while after that.

CHAPTER IX.

A COUNTRY SUNDAY MORNING.

EVERYBODY in the farmhouse was pretty thoroughly tired out that night. Even the boys and girls were willing to go to bed early. The next day would be Sunday; and there would be time to rest, and to get over the excitement they all had been undergoing. In order to be ready for Sunday's resting, however, it was well for them to do as much of sound and healthy sleeping as they could. The visitors from the city did their duty so well that when Bi Hunter and his sisters, and their older relatives, awoke that Sunday morning, every member of aunt Keziah's household, except Piney's mother, had been up and dressed for a good while.

Piney himself had driven the cows to pasture after they were milked. A little after his return to the house, he remarked quietly to aunt Keziah, —

“I guess Bill Young's dog would rather go to meeting to-day, or 'most anywhere else, than come loafing around our pasture-lot.”

“What’s he been doing there?”

Piney told her; and she exclaimed, —

“Served him right! I don’t care if Patty did kick over her pail, now I know how she came to lose her temper. She’s a jewel.”

“She’s as good as a watch-dog, and all the other cows know it. — I say, Roxy, are you going to pick strawberries this morning?”

“Why, Piney Hunter! Didn’t you know it was Sunday? No: I’m going to help aunt Keziah get breakfast. Besides, Susie and Bi’ll be up after a while; won’t they, aunt Keziah?”

“They will, unless they’ve made up their minds to sleep all day. — Ann, ring the bell to wake ’em up.”

“I’ll ring it,” said Roxy.

“Ring away, then. I expect it’ll have to be rung more’n once, if they’re to be got up in time. City-folks don’t seem to know what early rising is.”

“Isn’t it morning now, up in the city?” asked Roxy.

“Of course it is, but most of the people don’t know it. There now, don’t touch the eggs. Get your bell, and ring.”

That was one thing Roxy loved to do, and there was not a particle of danger but what she would make herself heard by everybody up stairs. She even went to the very door of her aunt Sarah’s

room, and rang until uncle Liph called out to her to know if she were ringing because it was church time.

"No, it isn't," said Roxy. "This is only getting-up time."

"Is breakfast ready?"

"No, sir; but we've begun to cook the fish. Aunt Keziah says if it's cooked to death, it'll be all your fault: she can't help it."

Then Roxy wondered why her uncle laughed so heartily; but she gave another good ring, and hurried down for a look at the pickerel while he was broiling.

"She's right though," remarked uncle Liph. "We must be on time. Wonder if Bayard is up."

Bi had heard the bell; and it was not a great while before he was out on the lawn, looking for Piney. He asked Roxy about him, when she came out of the house to say good-morning.

"Piney?" she said. "Oh! he's been taking the cows to pasture. He's out at the barn now."

"What, — on Sunday?"

"Oh, yes, of course! Our cows don't mind Sunday a bit. Do city cows mind it?"

"All the cows we have in our house do — but we haven't any. What do you all do on Sunday, out here in the country?"

"Oh! we eat breakfast and dinner and supper, and

we go to church and to Sunday school, and we're real good. Sunday's the right day to be good."

"Where's your church?"

"Oh! it's down to the village. We ride there; but aunt Keziah says there won't be room for you and Piney and me."

"In the church?"

"Why, no. The meeting-house is ever so big, — big enough for everybody. She means in the carriage. Some of you will have to walk both ways."

It was evident that Roxy's ears caught about all that was said in her hearing, and that her tongue was only too ready to repeat whatever her ears gave it; but Bi only laughed, and said, —

"Well, then, I'll walk with cousin Richard; that is, if it isn't too far."

"Why don't you call him Piney?"

"That isn't his name."

"Yes, it is. Everybody calls him Piney, — even Kyle Wilbur, and all the other boys."

"Do they? Well, I wouldn't stand it if I were he."

"He doesn't care, only he says it makes him red in the face."

"Roxy? Roxy? Where are you? Susie's looking for you."

It was aunt Keziah's voice, and Roxy sprang away to meet her cousin. Piney returned from his morn-

ing duties in time for breakfast, and Bi thought it was the first time he had had a good look at him. He was compelled to admit that he was a remarkably healthy, handsome, manly sort of boy; but he added cautiously to himself, —

“That is, for the country.”

The big pickerel was by no means “cooked to death;” and grandfather Hunter and uncle Liph declared that they had not enjoyed a breakfast so much for a long time.

“It’s late for us,” said aunt Keziah; “but I s’pose it’s early for you. I reckon we’ll all have just about time to dress for meeting. How many of you are going?”

Grandfather wanted to go, but he said he felt too tired and lame; and Piney’s mother felt like keeping him company at home. Chub was too young to go; but all the rest were ready, or meant to be.

“Then, Mary,” said aunt Sarah, “you and Bayard and Richard can go on foot. Your father and I, and aunt Keziah and Roxy and Susie, will fill the carryall.”

“I should say you would,” remarked Piney’s mother. “It’s a beautiful walk, Mary. I used to prefer it to riding.”

Mary was fond of walking, she said; and then she added that the distance was nothing, for she went a great deal farther than that in the city

almost any day. "Why, you can't do any shopping at all, without walking several miles."

"Country walking will tire you a good deal more than that does," said aunt Keziah; "but then, it'll do you more good."

"May I walk with 'em?" asked Roxy.

"I think not," said her mother. "You're too little, and you'd hinder them."

Roxy pouted, but there was no appeal; and even cousin Mary told her it would be too long a walk for her in so warm a day.

"Piney," said aunt Keziah, "we'll all start early enough; but you that are to walk had better go ahead. It'll be real warm, as Mary says; and you won't care to walk very fast."

"We'll take our time," said Piney; "but there's plenty of shade to walk under."

So there was, as Mary Hunter was glad to find, after she and her boy escort set out for the village. She had rarely seen such flourishing rows of elms and maples and horse-chestnut trees as lined that road.

The road itself was dusty enough; but there was no wind of any consequence, and there were not many carriages to stir the dust up. Now and then a great, lumbering, farmer's wagon came rolling slowly along, with a family of good people in it, on their way to meeting; and Mary thought she had

never before seen quite so many queer sun-bonnets and parasols.

"Bonnets?" said Piney. "Now, you just wait till we have a good chance to rummage our garret. I'll show you what sort of things people used to wear."

"The garret?" said Mary. "I'd like that immensely. You must not forget to show it to me. How those two boys are staring at us!"

"At you and Bi. They both know me well enough. That's Kyle Wilbur, — that thin-faced boy; and the other's Bill Young. He owns the dog that got tossed by our brindled heifer. They just do stare! They've no more manners" —

Before Piney could finish his somewhat angry remark, Kyle Wilbur nudged Bill Young with his elbow, and they both turned their heads the right way instantly, and hurried forward.

"She's looking at you," Kyle had whispered, as if that were quite enough to scare him.

"I've had a good look at her anyhow," said Bill Young; "and she isn't dressed any better'n some of our country-girls. Just plain white, and a straw hat. Are her folks poor?"

"I guess they ain't. But isn't she pretty! I say she just is, — I do."

"That's her brother, isn't it? Guess I could handle him, and not half try."

"You'd best not try it on, then, when Piney Hunter's nigh around. They're his cousins, you know."

"Who cares for Piney Hunter?"

"Well, I do. So do most folks. Do you mean you can handle him?"

"I ain't afraid of him."

"Well, no, he's the best-natured feller a-going; but I tell you what, Bill, he's awful strong."

"There goes the second bell," said Piney to Bi, at that moment; and in a minute or so more an open carriage rolled past them, and they heard Roxy calling, —

"Piney, the bell's tolling. You'll be late."

"No, we won't," said he. "There's time enough yet. Old Morgan just loves to toll that bell, it's so much easier than to ring it."

CHAPTER X.

AT THE MEETING-HOUSE.

WHEN the carryall passed Piney and his cousins, they were just in the edge of the pretty little village.

"How came it to be named 'Parable Centre'?" asked Mary.

"I can't exactly say," said Piney, "unless it was to know it from all the other Parables."

"All the others?" she said.

"Why, yes. There's Parable Square, and Parable Four Corners, and Upper Parable, and Lower Parable; and they started a place they were going to call Little Parable, but nobody wanted to live there, and they had to give it up."

"This one isn't very large."

"Well, it's a little place to have an academy and four meeting-houses; but there they are. Ours is the big white one, with so many teams hitched along in front of it."

Bi Hunter thought that the meeting-house was any thing but a big one, but he did not say so; and

Mary went on, wondering why all the people they met looked at them so curiously.

"Are we dressed differently?" she ventured to ask of Piney.

"Dressed? No, that isn't it; but you're strangers. Everybody knows everybody else around here. They all know me."

"Then they'll guess who we are."

"Of course they will; and you don't know how proud I am. Everybody envies a fellow that has city relations come to see him."

"Do they? I don't see what for."

There was a sparkle of fun in Mary's eyes; but they were getting pretty near the meeting-house, and she saw Roxy on the front steps of it, pointing at them. She was saying, although neither of them could hear her, —

"Deacon Simmons, there they come. That's cousin Mary. She didn't wear her best bonnet though, but her shoes and her stockings are beautiful."

The carryall had been driven very slowly indeed, as was proper on Sunday, but had nevertheless arrived a few minutes earlier than had the party on foot. There was a wide platform at the top of the steps leading to the meeting-house door; and a good many people were lingering there, just before going on in. All of them knew aunt Keziah; and Susie

and Roxy were surprised to see how many, especially of the older people, seemed to be acquainted with uncle Liph and aunt Sarah. They all appeared to be glad to see them too; and there was a great deal of hand-shaking, and of saying "How d'ye do?" and of asking about others who were not there.

Roxy, too, knew everybody, and felt that she had a duty to perform.

"Mrs. Simmons," she said to a good old lady, who was leaning upon her husband's arm, and waiting for a chance to speak to Roxy's relatives, "this little girl is my cousin Susie."

"Is she, my dear? I knew her mother when she was very young, but not so young as Susie is. — Will you kiss me, dear?"

"Yes, Susie, kiss her," said Roxy. "It's Mrs Simmons, and that's Deacon Simmons. Sometimes she kisses me. It won't hurt you a bit."

"No, it won't," laughed the old lady, as Susie lifted her fresh and pleasant little face. "I was a little girl once, but that was long ago."

"Ever so long ago," added Roxy. "And cousin Mary and Bi are coming along with Piney. There wasn't room for 'em in the carriage, and so they had to walk. I rode."

Deacon Simmons and his wife knew Roxy very well, and they might have said more to her and

Susie if aunt Keziah had not just then spoken to them. And then Roxy, a moment or so later, tugged at the old lady's gown to tell her that Piney and the rest were coming. Then the sweet-toned old bell, up there ever so high, in the tapering wooden steeple, ceased its tolling; and it was time for them all to go in.

Aunt Keziah led the way to a seat in the middle aisle; but after uncle Liph and aunt Sarah, and Bayard and Mary and Susie, had walked into it, she seemed to think that they were enough to fill it, and took Roxy with her into the next pew behind. Roxy heard her whisper to aunt Sarah, —

“It's just as well she and Susie shouldn't sit too close together.”

Aunt Sarah smiled, as if she understood and agreed with her; but Bi was just then staring after Piney.

Instead of remaining with his family, that young gentleman marched right on up the aisle, only a step or two behind the minister himself, who had just come in. He did not follow him into the pulpit, however, but turned suddenly to the left at the head of the aisle.

“Why,” said Bi to himself, “that looks like the choir! Isn't that a sort of reed-organ in front of it?”

So it was, and a pretty good one too; and, to Bi's

further astonishment, Piney Hunter sat quietly down behind the reed-organ, and began to finger the keys.

"How red his face is!" thought Bi. "Never saw it look quite so red."

Roxy could have told him that her brother always blushed dreadfully red whenever he sat down to play, but it was worse than common that morning. He would rather have played for all the people of Parable Centre than before his city relations.

"Aunt Keziah," loudly whispered Roxy, as she stood up and peered over into the next pew, "they haven't any hymn-books. Somebody's borrowed 'em all. I'll get some."

Before aunt Keziah could turn her eyes from the minister, to see what her niece might be doing, Roxy stepped gravely out, and walked up the aisle to where, on the reed-organ in front of Piney, there was quite a pile of hymn-books. Some girls older than Roxy would have taken only one or two; but she knew exactly how many people she had to provide for, and she piled up four in her chubby hands, saying to herself, "One for cousin Bi, and the rest of us can look over." That meant one hymn-book for each two persons, and an extra one for Bayard.

Roxy thought she had never before seen the people in that meeting-house look so remarkably pleasant. Almost every one was smiling at her as she came back down the aisle with her hymn-books,

and she smiled back at them of course. She wondered, though, what possessed Piney to play so hard on his organ as he was playing just then. What, too, could aunt Keziah mean by muttering, "Just like her!" as she held out her hand for a hymn-book?

Roxy had done her duty, and all that the grown-up people had to do was to do their duty; and the minister arose behind his pulpit, and gave out the text of his sermon:—

"And a little child shall lead them."

Roxy was troubled a little at first, as to whether the city people would be able to find the hymns; but they seemed to know how.

Bi listened attentively to the music, and so did cousin Mary; and they made up their minds that Piney was doing very well for a boy of his age. "Every way well enough for a country choir, and a reed-organ," was what Bi's decision meant; but he wondered how much Piney knew about a piano. He was to find out something interesting about that also, before the day ended.

After the services were completed, and while the congregation was getting out of the church, and into the wagons and carriages, or scattering slowly away on foot, there was a great deal more of shaking hands to be done. The minister himself shook hands with Roxy and Susie. He said to Roxy,—

"I suppose you can't stay to the Sunday-school to-day."

"No, sir," she said. "There's company at our house. There they are. We brought 'em all to church, 'cept grandpa. He'd have come, but he said he'd rheumatized one of his fore-feet, and he couldn't come."

“That’s a good reason,” said the minister, with a narrow escape from laughing. “Your grandfather is a pretty old man now. He’s older than I am by several years.”

“Yes, sir, he’s dreadful old; but then, he never boasts of it.”

"I suppose you mean that he never complains of it. Well, that's right. I won't either. — You have two very nice little nieces here, Miss Merrill."

"He means aunt Keziah," whispered Roxy to Susie. "I heard him call cousin Mary, Miss Hunter."

"That's her name," said Susie.

“Yes,” replied aunt Keziah to the minister. “You have already met the others. You must come and see them while they are here. I am rich in nephews and nieces.”

“And we’ve got eight cows,” began Roxy; but, just at that moment, uncle Liph took hold of her hand to lead her to the carriage, and aunt Keziah was left to tell the minister as much or as little

more about her dairy as she might see fit on Sunday.

The walk home was a pretty warm one for Piney and his cousins ; and they made it warmer for him by complimenting him upon his musical performances.

"Where did you learn?" asked Mary.

"Oh! mother taught me to play on the piano at home. She and I have a singing-time every Sunday afternoon. We can have one to-day if you'd like it, by and by."

"But the reed-organ?"

"Oh! that was a present to the church from a man who was going away, and wanted to give 'em something to remember him by."

"But who taught you to play on it?" persisted Mary.

"Why, we had a man, at first, that knew how; but they didn't praise him enough, and he left the choir. Then I used to go over and practise on it evenings, and sometimes mornings before school; and after a while I made it go."

Bayard somehow could not help remembering what Kyle Wilbur had told him, that "Piney always seems to get a good hold, when he goes for any thing;" and it struck him that there must be some truth in it. Whether it was a pickerel or a reed-organ, the red-faced boy was likely to grip it well, and then to hang on until he had mastered it.

They did not meet anybody to speak of or to; and the carryall was away ahead of them, for it had started at the same time, and people always drive home from church faster than they drive in going. They arrived in time for a cooling rest before dinner, and they all found themselves extraordinarily hungry.

CHAPTER XI.

A GREAT EGG-HUNT.

THAT turned out to be a very pleasant Sunday afternoon and evening at the farmhouse. Uncle Liph said that he seemed to be doing up a whole month's resting, and he did not appear to be making any special effort.

There was plenty of music. Cousin Mary was already aware that her aunt Elizabeth, Piney's mother, had been a good musician in her younger days; but neither Mary nor aunt Sarah knew how much of her powers she had preserved, in spite of ill health and a long widowhood. As for Piney, nothing could make him touch the piano until his mother said she was tired. Even then he only played a few simple accompaniments, which he did very well. After that, he insisted upon Mary and then Bayard taking his place. Roxy told them, —

“Aunt Keziah says Piney never will show off.”

She did not make any such attempt herself, but she sang in every hymn they tried. At least, she

did her very best to sing in each, and her voice was a very sweet one to hear.

“Roxy,” said her mother, “I think I must teach you and Susie something you can sing together.”

“Won’t that be splendid, Susie?” said Roxy. “You’ll learn ever so much while you’re here. Mother says I’m learning something new all the while.”

“I guess she’s right,” remarked aunt Sarah; “but you wouldn’t wish to know too much, would you?”

“Oh, no, aunt Sarah! I don’t suppose I could. Aunt Keziah says uncle Liph knows too much. Does he?”

“Keziah? Keziah?” shouted uncle Liph, “what have you been saying about me behind my back?”

“I said just what Roxy says I did,” said aunt Keziah. “You’ve read so many books about people everybody else has forgotten, and you know so much about them, that you might almost just as well have lived when they did.”

“Well, no, Keziah,” said he. “I like these times very well. Some day I want you and Roxy and Piney to come and visit me, and see all my curiosities. — How would you like that, Roxy?”

“Oh! I’d like it ever so much. Hasn’t grandpa got some too?”

“Plenty of ’em. We keep ’em all together. When you come, I’ll show you. Why, Roxy, I’ve

a big stuffed eagle, and an owl that's bigger than any hen you've got."

"O uncle Liph! how I'd like to see them! But then, our hens lay eggs. Susie and I are going to the barn to hunt for eggs in the morning."

"My owl doesn't lay any eggs. The eagle doesn't either. They might just as well be dead."

"Ain't stuffed birds dead?" asked Roxy. "Piney stuffed a crow once, but he shot it first."

"That was right," said uncle Liph. "I'm glad he did."

"Guess Piney knows," she said; but just then Ann rang the tea-bell, and Roxy had no further opportunity to tell all there was in her mind about the crow, and how remarkably well and lifelike he looked after he was stuffed.

After supper grandpa took Roxy on his knee, and told her some wonderful stories that she had never before heard. Susie came too, and pulled up a chair beside them; and even Piney seemed to be listening, now and then, until aunt Keziah said, —

"There, grandpa, she won't sleep a wink to-night, with all those things in her head. It's past her bedtime now."

"Don't you think you will sleep, Roxy?" asked grandpa, as he put his wrinkled hand gently upon her dark curls.

Her head, as she sat in his lap, had been leaning

upon his shoulder; and his last story about the ancient times had been a long one.

"She'll sleep, I guess," said Piney, with a chuckle, when Roxy made no answer; "but you'll have to wake her up now, before you can put her to bed."

"I should say so!" exclaimed aunt Keziah. "The poor little thing has entertained her company till she's tired out."

"Roxy? Roxy?" said grandpa. "Wake up. It's bedtime. The chickens are all on the roost."

Roxy's eyes were opening, and she heard him speak of chickens.

"No," she said, "the little chickens creep under the old hen; and the big chickens will roost on the sleigh in the barn, in spite of all we can do."

There was evidently little to be feared, for her, from grandpa Hunter's marvellous stories; and Susie was used to hearing them. As for Chub, he had now been in his crib for some time, forgetful of every thing.

"Bi," said Piney, "let's go to bed early. One of the hands'll take care of the cows in the morning. You and I can have a good fish and a swim before breakfast."

"That'll suit me," said Bi; "specially the going to bed. Seems to me I never was so sleepy in all my life."

The older folk said the same; and before long

the whole farmhouse was as quiet as one of uncle Liph's stuffed birds.

That is a time of the year, however, when the sunlight stays in the world as late as it can every evening, and comes back as early as possible in the morning. It is just as if the sun could not bear to be away from so beautiful a thing as this earth of ours is in June. It was a good night to sleep in, and not too warm, with all the windows open to the fresh breeze from the hills ; and it was not too long. Even Roxy awoke bright and early the next morning.

"Oh, the eggs!" she exclaimed, as she sprang out of bed. "We must get some for uncle Liph's breakfast."

Susie was fast asleep ; but Roxy leaned across the bed, and shook her.

"Wake up, Susie! Wake up!"

"I'm awake. Is it morning? That is, I'm almost pretty near awake," yawned Susie, as she opened her blue eyes.

"Morning? Why, if you listen with both your ears, you can hear the hens cackle. That's at the barn."

"I hear them. What do they do it for?"

"So we sha'n't forget about coming after the eggs. Sometimes we might forget if the hens didn't cackle."

"Don't they ever forget?"

"I guess not. I never heard them forget. Hurry up now, and we'll get ever so many."

Susie was hurrying already, for she liked the idea of hunting for eggs. In a few minutes more they were down in the kitchen, asking Ann for the egg basket. This was quite a pretty one, made of willow, with a cover that was tied on by a red ribbon.

"Piney bought it for me," said Roxy. "All the chickens belong to him and me."

"That's nice, isn't it?" said Susie. "I wish I had some. What do you do with them?"

"Oh! we feed them. They're all ours till they get into the house. Then they're mother's and aunt Keziah's."

"Do they ever come into the house?"

"They have to come in. But there's always enough left in the barn."

"Who brings 'em in?"

"Oh! I bring in the eggs; but I never bring in any chickens, — 'cept once I brought in some little wet ones, and put 'em by the fire to warm."

"Were they very wet?"

"Guess they were. And the old hen followed me, and she clucked and clucked; and when I put down the basket, with all her chickens in it, she sat right down on the top of the basket, and picked at me."

"What a naughty old hen!" said Susie.

"So I said to her; but Piney only laughed at me, and he carried them all out to the barn again, — the old hen and all."

The two children had talked their way to the barnyard-gate. There were two gates, — a big wide one, and a little one at the side of it.

"The big gate's for wagons," said Roxy. "I could never open that. There's nothing but a latch on this one. Oh, dear me!"

"What's the matter, Roxy?"

"Why, Susie, there's Piney's bad sheep. They've left him in the barnyard. There he is."

"Is that a bad sheep?" asked Susie. "I thought all the sheep in the world were real good. Does he bite?"

"He isn't a bit good. No, he doesn't bite: he only bunts. Don't you see? He's got horns. Don't you say a word to him."

"But, Roxy, won't he run after us?"

"I guess he won't. But you mustn't point your finger at him. We'll run right across to the barn before he thinks about us."

For all Susie could see, the old ram looked peaceable enough. He was nibbling at a stray bunch of hay away off on the other side of the barnyard. She hurried along, therefore, at Roxy's side, with one hand upon the handle of the basket, and keep-

ing a sharp watch upon the conduct of the "bad sheep." Roxy still further explained him, —

"He's one of Piney's pets. Piney feeds him, and makes him do all sorts of things; but I don't like him one bit. He bunts dreadfully."

They entered the barn through a small door which led into the stable. All the horses and cows were gone to pasture, or to work; but both the stable itself and all the barn had a neat and tidy look. Aunt Keziah could not bear to have any part of her place out of order.

"Where are the hens?" asked Susie.

"Why, the hens? They're all over everywhere. I know where to find some of the nests though, and we can hunt for some more. There isn't much hay here now, but there will be pretty soon."

"Where do they get it from?"

"Out in the hay-field. We'll go and see 'em make it. Maybe they'll ride us on a hay-wagon. That's fun. Did you ever have a hay-ride?"

"No," said Susie, "I never did; but I saw a picture of one once."

"A picture of a hay-ride? With a big heaping load of hay, and some girls on it like you and me?"

"Yes; and some big girls, and a whole lot of boys."

"I wish I had one. O Susie, here's a nest! Two eggs in it."

"Two eggs? Why, no, there's three."

"No, there isn't. These two are real eggs, and that's only a nest-egg."

"What do you do with that one?"

"Why, that one? We just leave it in the nest."

"How do you know it's a nest-egg?"

"Why!" exclaimed Roxy, in some surprise, "it isn't an egg. Don't you see, Susie? It's only make believe, of white glass."

"So it is. And there's been something printed on it."

"Piney put that on. He says they are nothing but fraud eggs. They're just to fool the hens."

"How can they? The hens don't know how to read. This one says, 'I'm a fraud.'"

"Well, that's it. The hens see it there, and they think it's one of their own eggs. They don't know any better."

"The stupid things!" said Susie.

Roxy had already put those two eggs into her basket, and it was only a minute or so before she was triumphantly showing a second nest. This time there were three besides the "nest-egg," and Susie examined the latter with great care.

"This one says, 'I'm lonely.'"

"That's Piney's fun. He cut a piece of poetry from a newspaper once, and pasted it on a nest-egg."

"What for?"

"It didn't do any good, I guess; but Piney said it would make all the hens keep away from that nest, and so he washed the poetry off."

Egg-hunting was capital fun, and they found nest after nest in all sorts of queer out-of-the-way corners. In one place there was a great yellow hen on the nest.

"Don't disturb her," said Roxy. "She's one of Piney's heathen, and she's sitting on ever so many eggs."

"A heathen!" exclaimed Susie.

"He says so. She's a Chinee. She's real tall when she stands up. He calls her a Shang-high."

"I've heard of 'em," said Susie, as she stared at the yellow hen. "So that's a Shang-high! I never saw one before."

"There's half a dozen of 'em, when they're all there. The rooster's 'most as big as a turkey, and you just ought to hear him crow."

"Is it a loud crow?"

"You'd think so if you heard him once. He can't help it. Piney says he'd die if he tried to keep all that crow inside of him: if he didn't let some of it out, it would kill him."

"Why, Roxy!" exclaimed Susie at that moment, "the basket's more'n half full. We don't want any nore, do we?"

"Guess we couldn't find any more if we did. Isn't it fun though?"

"Splendid! O Roxy! will that bad sheep be out there?"

"Yes, he'll be there; but we needn't say a word to him, and I guess he'll be good."

"Well, he knows you, but he doesn't know who I am. I wish Piney was here."

"I'll take care of you," said Roxy.

CHAPTER XII.

FISHING, SWIMMING, AND THE RAM.

WHEN Piney and Bi entered the boat at the landing that morning, the sun was hardly more than half an hour high. Bi thought he had never seen anything more beautiful than the lake was, with the woods and the fields around it.

"It's better than any thing there is in the city," he exclaimed, as Piney took the oars, and began to pull rapidly away from the shore. "Which'll we do first, — fish, or swim?"

"Swim, of course," said Piney. "The water isn't a bit too cold. Then we can fish after that till breakfast-time. I never stay in long, — not long enough to get tired out."

"Where do you go in swimming?"

"Over there by the bushes. Nobody can see you from the house or from the road; and the water's good and deep, and there isn't any eel-grass on the bottom."

"What would that do?"

"It might tangle your feet. Water-lily stems are just as mean for that as grass is. I don't like to have any thing touch me when I'm in the water."

"Did you ever touch a fish?"

"Fish? No. They get out of the way fast enough. Here we are." It was a nice kind of a sheltered nook, that Piney was now pulling the boat into. The moment its nose touched the shore, he dropped his oars, and began to get ready.

"You put on more clothes than I did, Bi. Why don't you begin to strip?"

"I will. I brought along my bathing-suit."

"Bathing-suit? Oh, yes! that's it. I've heard of 'em. I'd like to see one."

"I had it last year down by the seashore. It's as good as new."

Bi unrolled his bathing-suit, and spread it across his knees. It was a very good one, of bright blue flannel trimmed with red, and he was half inclined to be proud of it; but Piney eyed it curiously for a moment, and remarked, —

"Well, you wear that if you want to. I'd rather have mine."

"Yours? Where is it? I didn't see you bring any."

"Got it on now, — under all my other clothes. It won't come off till I'm skinned."

There was plenty of fun in Piney; and by the time about a quarter of it was out, Bi Hunter had decided not to try that lake in his "nobby" bathing-suit. There was really no need of it in that bush-hidden cove. There were woods behind the high shelving banks, and you could see the clean gravelly bottom through the clear, bright water. The suit was rolled up again; and Bi seemed a little slow, after that, in making his preparations to go into the water. Piney fastened one end of the boat to the stem of a bush on shore; and then it seemed to be hardly a minute before he gave a ringing shout, stepped lightly to the outer end, threw his heels into the air with a great spring, and went down, head first, through the splashing surface.

"What a dive that was!" exclaimed Bi, as the boat rocked vigorously under him. "But why doesn't he come up? Ah! there he is."

There he was indeed, five or six rods away; for Piney was a little proud of his skill as a swimmer, and he could "show off" once in a while.

"I say," said Bi, as he came puffing back towards the boat, "can you swim under water?"

"Of course I can, but you've got to have a good deep dive first. Come on in!"

"I'm a-coming," said Bi decidedly; but he did not try a "header" from the boat. He waded in a little slowly from the shore, and it seemed to make

aim half uncomfortable to find how quickly the water began to come up to his shoulders.

"Is it very deep?" he asked.

"Splendid! No danger of touching bottom anywhere. I guess it's twenty or thirty feet out here. See me tread water."

"How do you do that?"

"Just the same as if you were walking up stairs in a hurry. Why don't you strike out?"

"They say fresh water's harder to swim in than salt water is."

"Salt water must be real easy, then. I wouldn't care to have any thing easier'n this."

There was no help for it. Bi thought of his namesake the Chevalier Bayard, the knight "without fear and without reproach;" and he drew a long breath, and threw himself boldly forward.

"Don't strike so fast," shouted Piney. "You'll tire yourself out in less'n no time. Take it easy. Look at me."

So saying, he threw himself over upon his back, and darted away through the water in a manner that made his city cousin open his eyes. Now, however, that Bi had actually made a start, and had discovered that he could swim in fresh water so much more easily than he had expected, he really began to enjoy it. He did not venture very far away from the shore or the boat; but he was fast gaining con-

fidence in himself, when Piney, who had been showing him how to "float," suddenly rolled over and over, and struck out for the land.

"Are you tired?" asked Bi.

"No, I ain't tired; and, what's more, I don't mean to be. That's all the swimming I want before breakfast. Let's put on our clothes, and go for some fish."

Bi was willing enough to follow that kind of example, and they had brought with them plenty of tackle and bait. Neither of them was at all wearied by his morning bath; and their dressing did not detain them long, after a minute or so of vigorous work with a crash towel.

"You'll soon learn," said Piney. "All you need is practice. You must go in every morning while you're out here."

"Won't that be too much?"

"Well, you can't always do it, you know. Besides, you mustn't stay in too long. If a fellow knows enough to come out in time, it won't hurt him. Then you'll learn ten times as much as you would if you only went in now and then, and tired yourself half to death. I've known fellows make themselves sick that way."

"Is this the way you learned?"

"It's all the training I ever had. Don't you think it's enough?"

Bi thought it was, and he said so; and now the warm sunshine that was pouring upon him felt wonderfully nice all over him.

They pulled away to another spot, and anchored the boat for their fishing. The fish bit fairly well, as they are apt to do so early in the morning; and, by the time Piney said they must start for the house, the two boys had quite a string of perch and pumpkin-seeds between them; but the larger fish had probably all gone off for a swim of their own, or perhaps for their breakfast.

"We'll have these for ours," said Piney, "if we get there in time to clean 'em. They're always the nicest when they're just out of the water."

"So father says," said Bi. "He's fonder of 'em than I am."

"Glad of it. There'll be fresh eggs too, right from the nests."

Piney was more positive about the egg part of his breakfast than he would have been if he had known what was going on at the barnyard. He and Bi reached the landing, and hurried to the house with their fish.

"They're very nice," said aunt Keziah; "but I do wish you'd go and call Roxy. She and Susie went out to the barn for eggs ever so long ago."

Piney started at once; and Bi followed him, for sheer lack of any thing else to do, that he could

think of just then. They reached the gate only a moment after the two girls came out of the barn.

Susie's first and foremost thought had been about the "bad sheep."

"There he is!" she exclaimed to Roxy. "He's right in our way."

As she said that, she pointed straight at the very wicked animal with her little forefinger.

Now, Piney's pet ram was taught to consider a "point" as a sort of challenge; and his woolly head and curling horns were lowered instantly.

"O Susie!" screamed Roxy. "What have you done? He's going to bunt."

Susie screamed also, and sprang away towards the gate, letting go of the basket-handle. Roxy looked about her for an instant in great perplexity; but there was an old wagon-box lying near, bottom up, and she set the basket down upon the corner of that before she followed Susie. The ram had stood almost still a moment, shaking his threatening head and getting ready, so that the two girls were beyond his reach by the time he got through with what Roxy called "making motions." When he again looked up, all the enemy he could see to strike at was the basket of eggs on the corner of the old wagon-box. It was not pointing at him, to be sure, but it was there; and, just as Piney and Bi looked over the gate, he charged for it full tilt.

If the old ram had been one of the crested knights whom Bi Hunter was so fond of reading about, he could not have made a fairer hit at a basket. Of course he was stopped by the wagon-box; but his hard head reached the basket, and the shock was a very bad affair for the eggs. The cover flew from the basket as it struck the ground, and its contents went out in all directions.

Perhaps the "bad sheep" might even have followed his mischief farther, but that Piney darted in and caught him by the horns, scolding him as sharply as he had breath to, between his peals of laughter.

"Bi," he shouted, "come in and save what's left of those eggs. Only about half of 'em are broken. Pick 'em up."

Bi was laughing hard too; but he came in and did his duty, with one eye on Piney and the ram.

"Guess just about half of 'em are used up. Their shells weren't made thick enough."

"Not for his head. Don't I wish the folks at the house could have seen it! — You old horny-headed rascal! I'll have to tie you up."

"Susie pointed at him," said Roxy. "I told her, but she forgot."

"He remembered, then. Now, Bi, you get back outside the gate. If he once gets a-going, there's no stopping him. He'll butt at every thing he can see now, all day long."

"He is the very worst sheep I ever saw," remarked Susie.

"Yes, he is," said Roxy; "but he's afraid of Piney. He won't even bunt at him when he lets go."

Piney was not so sure about that kind of forbearance, but what he led his pet close to the gate before losing hold of the horns. Then he gave a sharp, sudden shove, and got out of the way; and the ram had the whole barnyard to himself.

CHAPTER XIII.

BI ON THE BALL-GROUND.

GRANDFATHER HUNTER and uncle Liph made any amount of fun at the breakfast-table over the conduct of the "bad sheep," and the sad fate of the eggs; but they all listened to what Susie had to tell about the nests, and Piney's "frauds."

Then Bi told his father what a splendid swim he had had.

"Keep it up, Bayard," said his father. "That's a good beginning."

"But, Piney," said his mother, "what will he find to do to amuse himself while you are at school?"

"Oh! he can come right along to the village with me. There'll be a game of ball on the green."

"Yes," added Mary Hunter; "and he can take a letter for me to the post-office."

"That's so," remarked grandfather; "and there may be letters there for some of the rest of us. I'd like to get one from your grandmother."

"I left her safe in Boston," said uncle Liph;

"but she may have written. I'd like to hear from Mr. Sadler about business already. It seems as if I'd been gone a week."

"He is your junior partner now, is he not?" asked Piney's mother.

"Yes; and he has more of the management in his hands, all the time, than I have. I trust him entirely. He is a very excellent young man."

"Young men, nowadays, ain't what they used to be," remarked aunt Keziah; but both grandfather Hunter and aunt Sarah had a good word to say in Mr. Sadler's behalf, and Piney made up his mind that his uncle's junior partner must be somebody remarkable.

Immediately after breakfast he and Bi started for the village.

"This is Monday," he said, as they went along. "I wouldn't give much for all the boys'll learn to-day, and to-morrow and next day."

"Why not?" asked Bi.

"Oh! these last days of the term don't count for any thing, 'cept just the being there. They're all kind of afraid of examination. I know I am. It's too late, though, to do any thing on our reviews. Besides, we're thinking of the exhibition and vacation, and all sorts of things."

"What's the exhibition to be?"

"Well, I don't know. We always have one.

There'll be speaking pieces and dialogues, and singing and music and visitors, and all that sort of thing. Sometimes I think there's fun in it, and then sometimes I don't."

"Are you going to speak a piece?"

"Of course I am: I always do. But I've got a short one this time, — shorter than Roxy's."

"Is she to speak too?"

"Roxy? Why, she wouldn't miss it for any thing. I say, can you play base-ball?"

"Oh, yes! I belong to a club."

Bi was more than a little pleased to speak of something in the line of out-of-door sports in which he could safely believe himself to be an expert.

"A regular club?" said Piney, brightening up. "Now, Bi, do you know I'm out-and-out glad of that?"

"What for?"

"Well, I'll tell you. I wish you'd just take a little of the nonsense out of Kyle Wilbur and the other fellows. They'll be sure to think you can't play worth a cent, 'cause you're from the city, you know."

"All right, Piney. I'll try and show 'em something."

There was a growing look of determination on his face, as Piney asked him, —

"What can you do best?"

"I don't care where they put me. In our club we change places all over the field. A fellow learns it all if he's got it in him. Some fellows never can learn, somehow."

"Well, so do we, of course; but it's all irregular. We play just as it happens."

"Are you a good player?"

"How do I know? I never saw anybody play but our boys."

That was dodging the question, as Bi found out afterwards; for Piney was by all odds the best hand of his age in the whole academy, at either bat or ball, or in the "field." That morning, however, he was in something of a hurry, and did not seem inclined to do much talking.

"There's the post-office," he said, as they entered the village, — "over there by the tavern. The southern stage'll be in with the mail in an hour or so. It'll take 'em about another hour to distribute it. If I were you, I'd wait for all that before I went there."

"That's what I'll do. Any letters that left the city Saturday will get here by that mail."

"Guess they will. I say, Bi, look at the boys on the green. I wonder how many of em'll cut their lessons this morning! I won't, now."

In fact, he never did cut them; and his rosy face was one of the sure things to be seen in its place

in his class every time. Kyle Wilbur, however, and Bill Young, and some others of the academy boys, — not to speak of the village boys who were not in school at all, — were more in a state of mind for base-ball than for books that morning, it was so very near to vacation.

Piney introduced his cousin to two or three of them; and they were quite polite, in their way, about asking him to take a hand in the game. Kyle Wilbur said to Bill Young, in a very low tone, aside, —

“Of course he can’t play, you know. He’s from the city. But then he’s a stranger, and he’s Piney Hunter’s cousin. He won’t be much in the way.”

“Well, yes, we’ve got to take him in, I s’pose. But it’s kind o’ too bad. The other side’ll beat us all hollow. He’s just a city dandy, and he’ll be getting us put out all the while.”

“Just so,” said Kyle. “Can’t help it, though. I won’t go back on Piney, game or no game.”

“All right. Go ahead.”

Bi did not hear that conversation, nor did he seem to notice the glances that followed every movement he made. He took off his coat and vest, displaying for the criticism of the village boys a remarkably showy pair of suspenders. Then his collar and necktie and cuffs were taken off, and

carefully stuffed into his coat-pockets; and he rolled up his trousers a little.

"What a dandy he is!" remarked Bill Young. "I say, mister, you'd better put all that rigging of yours away somewhere."

"Hang it on a tree," said Kyle. "Nobody'll touch it. There ain't no thieves 'round here. — Bill, they've won the toss. We're out, to begin on."

"Well, who cares? I s'pose Frank Jones'll catch for our side. Pity Piney Hunter isn't here to pitch for us."

Piney had already walked across the green towards the academy, and his services were out of the question. It was a large white building, with a "chunky" looking bell-tower on top of it; and in another moment he disappeared through its wide front door.

"I'll have to pitch," said Bill.

"You can't pitch worth a cent," replied Kyle bluntly. "I say, mister, didn't I hear Piney call you Bi?"

"Shouldn't wonder if you did."

"Well, Bi, can you pitch?"

"I'll try it on. If I can't, I guess you can find it out."

"I guess so. — Hullo, Frank! Boys, I say, Piney Hunter's cousin's going to pitch!"

The matter seemed to be settled at once; and Bi

felt a sort of tingle in his fingers as he picked up the ball and took his place. If there was any one accomplishment in which he felt sure he could beat all Parable Centre, and all the region round about, it was in the pitching of a base-ball. He was not so very far out of the way, and Frank Jones began to get some such notion when he made his catch of the first ball Bi pitched at him. It came like a young cannon-shot, and Frank was lucky in having strong, well-toughened fingers. They had been seasoned properly, however; and their owner was startled into shouting exultingly, —

“It’s all right, boys. Piney’s dandy knows how to pitch.”

Frank blushed crimson the moment his queer speech was out of his mouth; but Bi muttered, —

“Dandy? Is that it? Wait till I get hold of that bat, and if I don’t show ’em! Why, they’re a lot of slouches.”

They were not quite so bad as that; but not one of that crowd of country boys had ever seen a match-game played by a “professional nine,” nor had they been taught a single lesson by a trained instructor. Such a thing as “schooling” in base-ball had never entered their heads, and Bi Hunter had all that advantage over them.

It was not a very great while after the play began, that, as Piney Hunter passed close to one of

the academy windows, after doing some work on the blackboard, he heard a great cheer from the boys out upon the green. He could not help looking through the window to see what was up.

"Bi's got the bat," he said to himself. "See him run!"

A "run" it was; but the cheer was given for the manner in which he had batted that ball.

"Bully for the dandy!" shouted Frank Jones; but Bill Young grumbled surlily, —

"Oh, well! it's nothing but a sort of a trick. Them city fellers pick up lots of tricks. I'll bet he can't do it again."

He would have surely lost any such wager, for Bi did something very much like it every time his turn came to him. Instead of losing the game for his side, as had been prophesied, they were all ready, at the end of it, to elect him captain of their nine.

The best players, take them all around, were plainly upon the other side; and they were making some changes that the boys told Bi were likely to make the matter worse. His blood was thoroughly up now, dandy or no dandy; and he began to "captain" his nine in a way they had never been accustomed to. They would not have stood it for a moment under any other circumstances, or if he had not showed himself so good a player, and if he had not been so complete a stranger. Even Piney

Hunter would not have been obeyed as Bi was by that very unruly little army. Bill Young rebelled at first; but Kyle Wilbur put him down with,—

“Now, Bill, that yaller dog of your’n can beat you pitching. His mouth’s always open too, just like your’n. — I say, Bi, — mister, — if you’ll just let him wear them galluses of yours, he’ll be quiet.”

“My what? Oh! you mean my suspenders. Can’t take ’em off just now. We must whitewash that crowd this time. Come on, boys.”

“He’s played ball before,” sagely remarked Frank Jones. “He knows what he’s about. Guess it’s all a humbug about his being a feller from the city.”

When Piney came out, at the noon recess, he was proud enough to hear Kyle Wilbur’s glowing account of the manner in which his cousin had distinguished himself.

“Bi,” said he, “I’ll tell aunt Kezi, and all of ’em, when we get home. Now, I’ll tell you what: I’ve got to stay for the afternoon session, but there’s time for us to go to the post-office before I eat my lunch.”

The post-office of the village of Parable Centre was a queer sort of place; at least, it seemed so to Bi. It consisted of nothing but one corner of a grocery-store, fenced off from the rest, and fitted up with drawers and boxes.

“That’s our box,” said Piney, as they went in, —
“the one marked ‘A.’”

Just then the postmaster stuck his head around the corner of the partition, and exclaimed, —

“I say, Piney, your box is cram-jam full; and here’s a swad of things that wouldn’t go in. You’ve got some visitors, hain’t ye?”

“Yes,” said Piney, “we’ve got ’em. — Bi, what a stack of magazines and newspapers! Do you always get as many as that?”

“No, sir,” said Bi, as he began to glance over the heap of envelopes and little bundles. “A good many of ’em are for father and mother and grandfather. Some of ’em are for me.”

“But what a lot of ’em are for cousin Mary! She can’t read ’em all in a week.”

Certainly not, unless she should give all her time to it, and skim some of those pamphlets rather carelessly. There was a queer look upon Bi’s face, but he did not say any thing. Still, it somehow occurred to Piney to notice, that, while Mary seemed to have so much more than her fair share of the printed matter, all addressed to her in the same handwriting, she had not so much as one solitary letter.

“Now, Bi,” he said, “I’ll go back and eat my lunch, and you’d better go home to dinner. Why can’t you go out in the boat alone, and have a good time fishing? I do, every chance I can get.”

“Guess I will,” said Bi. “I can take care of myself. But I’ll be glad when your vacation gets here.”

CHAPTER XIV

UP AND DOWN THE ROAD.

WHETHER in city or in country, it is all the same, — Monday is washing-day.

Uncle Liph told Roxy it was “constitutional” to have it so; and as soon as she and Susie were out upon the lawn after breakfast, she asked her cousin, —

“What did your papa mean? What is ‘constirootional’?”

“‘Stutional,’” said Susie, correcting her. “Why it means that you can’t help it. It’s like grandma’s cough.”

“Oh, that’s it! Well, aunt Keziah won’t go walking with us till all the clothes are hung out.”

Aunt Keziah, however, was a woman who was likely to begin that kind of work pretty early in the morning. On that particular Monday she had a woman come over from the village to help Ann; and so, by the middle of the forenoon, all the lines that were stretched between the trees and fence.

posts in the back-yard were white with the fruit of the wash-tub, — only that some of them were red or checked in places, here and there.

“It’s a big washing,” said Susie. “Are all those little stockings yours?”

“No, they ain’t: some of ’em are Chub’s. One day there was a chair left under the line; and Piney’s big Shang-high rooster jumped up on it, and he pulled down all my stockings off the line.”

“What did he do it for?”

“I don’t know. Piney said he was a poor heathen Chinee, and didn’t know any better. But then he crowed about it.”

“Roxy, are we all going walking?”

“I guess we ain’t. Uncle Liph, and mother, and grandpa are going out a-riding by and by. But aunt Keziah and cousin Mary said they’d go with us.”

“I’m glad of that. It’ll be real nice. Only I do hope we won’t meet any bad sheep.”

“There ain’t any. We’ve got the only one there is.”

Roxy seemed almost inclined to be proud of that fact, if it were one.

It was not long before aunt Keziah called them in, to see if they were ready for their walk; and then, with Chub himself toddling along ahead of them, they all marched through the gate and up the road.

"Isn't it beautiful!" exclaimed Mary to aunt Keziah. "I do so love the country!"

"You'd better make up your mind to stay in it, then," said aunt Keziah. "I'd never settle down in the city to spend my days there, if I were you."

"We can't always know what is coming to us," said Mary; and she looked very hard, while she spoke, at the top of a big tree across the road. "Is that an oak?"

"Oak? Sakes alive! Why, it's a sugar-maple. You might as well have taken it for an apple-tree."

"Oh!" said Mary. "So it is."

"Susie," said Roxy, "do you ever go out a-walking when you're at home in the city?"

"Why, yes, of course I do. We walk everywhere, all over."

"Is it as nice as this is?"

"Well, you can't see any grass there, nor any thistles, or fences, except iron fences and railings."

"Can you see the city?"

"Why, it's all city. There are houses and stores, and show-windows with ever so many nice things in them."

"Candy, and new bonnets, and cake, and dolls?"

"Oh, yes! and the drug-stores have big red and green and blue and yellow bottles in the windows; and all the street-cars carry you anywhere for five cents."

"Well, but what do they do with you when you haven't got any five cents?"

"Oh! you always have five cents in the city, — even when you walk. I've been shopping into all the stores, with mamma and Mary."

"What's to shopping?" asked Roxy.

"Oh, well! it's to go everywhere, and buy what you came for, and look at every thing you didn't come for. Only mamma and Mary always come away before they've seen every thing. I wouldn't."

"I wouldn't either," said Roxy. "I'd stay till I'd seen all there was."

"Why, aunt Keziah!" exclaimed Mary. "Where is Chub running to? What queer people they are! Does he know them?"

"Those? Oh! they're nothing but Indians from the Reservation. It's Piney's friend Hawknose John, that he was talking of. The little one is the Woodchuck, and the two women are their squaws."

"The tall man has picked up Chub. He won't hurt him?"

"Hurt him? No, indeed. I only hope he hasn't any maple-sugar in his pocket. He's always giving Chub something."

They had quickened their pace, and were pretty near the little squad of Onondagas. Roxy herself tripped on ahead of them; but Susie was contented to take hold of her grown-up sister's dress, and walk

beside her. The two squaws had each a burden to carry ; for on each pair of shoulders, tightly held in a blanket in spite of the heat of the day, there nestled a bit of a brown-faced baby.

“Oh, the pappooses!” exclaimed Roxy. “See ’em, Susie?”

“Why, how funny they are!”

“I should think they would melt under those blankets, such a day as this,” said aunt Keziah ; “but they don’t. Indians take naturally to blankets.”

Mary was really interested in the pappooses ; and the two squaws smiled very pleasantly as the ladies patted their dusky babies, but neither of them uttered a word.

“Mine,” said Hawknose John, pointing to one. “Real Onondaga. Woodchuck’s,” he added, pointing to the other disdainfully. “Half of him Oneida. How boy like bow? Ugh! Break window yet?”

“No, John,” said aunt Keziah ; “but he shot a pickerel, — biggest one I’ve seen in a year.”

“Ugh! Good. Boy make Indian some day.”

Mary ventured to say, —

“But we do not wish him to be an Indian. He is white.”

“Good. Can’t be Onondaga. Better be white than s’pose Oneida, like Woodchuck. Ugh!”

“Oneida good,” grunted the short Indian. “Hawknose John ’teal a cow.”

"How!" exclaimed his tall companion, with a rapid volley of harsh guttural words in his own language.

"That'll do, John," said aunt Keziah. "You and the Woodchuck are always quarrelling."

"Bad little Indian. Tell big lie. Better keep eye on handsome young squaw. Woodchuck 'teal her. Heap worse'n 'teal cow."

He did not condescend to smile, but there was a keen twinkle of fun in his beady black eyes; and aunt Keziah said, —

"No, John; but he'd better look out, or we will steal his pappoose. What will you take for yours?"

"Potatoes," said John gravely. "All can carry in big bag."

"That's what you made me give you for Piney's dow," laughed aunt Keziah. "I won't make any more bargains with you. You might carry off the farm."

"Good. Ugh! S'pose I did? Indian own him all once. Trade him to aunt Keziah grandfather for blanket and old gun,—rum too, mebbe. Ali tree, den. Plenty deer. Plenty Onondaga. Indian no pick berry, and trade bow for potatoes: keep bow to kill deer."

"He isn't so far wrong, Mary. Your great-grandfather used to trade a good deal with the Indians."

"But, aunt Keziah," said Roxy, "we don't want any Indian babies in our house, do we?"

"Why not, Roxy?" said Mary. "That's a real pretty one."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Susie. "Buy it, and we'll take it with us to the city."

"We never could grow it up at our house, anyhow," said Roxy.

"Wouldn't it eat?" asked Susie. "Not even if you gave it milk? Couldn't Piney tame it for you?"

Hawknose John's squaw had been listening; and she now broke out into a merry fit of laughter, as she shook her head, and drew her blanket tighter around her little one. She had not said a word; for that would have been contrary to Indian custom, in the presence of her husband. Both she and the other squaw started off down the road, followed pretty quickly by Hawknose John and the Woodchuck. Chub trotted after them for a rod or two, chattering and calling to them; but they did not look back.

"I'm glad we met them," said Mary.

"Susie," said Roxy, "what sort of Indians do you have in the city?"

"Only wooden ones."

"Wooden ones? Wooden Indians?"

"Yes. They have 'em stand on the sidewalk

for signs, before all the tobacco-stores. But then, we've got all the other kinds of men."

"What other kinds?"

"Oh! every kind,—Chinese, and soldiers, and firemen, and policemen, and letter-carriers, and all sorts of men."

"Do they all dress like Indians?"

"Why, no, of course they don't. Some of 'em wear tin on their hats, but then it's made up real pretty, 'stead of hanging loose like the Wood-chuck's. They wear feathers, too, sometimes; that is, the soldiers do. O Roxy, you ought to see them march!"

"Ain't you afraid of 'em?"

"No: they never hurt anybody. But you've always got to get out of their way,—unless you've got a street-car; then you don't."

There was a great plenty for the girls to talk about; but it would not do to take too long a walk, if only because Chub was with them. So after aunt Keziah had led them to the top of a little hill, and showed them a glimpse of the next lake, away in the distance, they all made the best of their way home.

The children, indeed, were willing to follow Chub's good example, and have a nap. They had risen early that morning, and had been as busy as two bees ever since; and it was now nearly noon.

The sleepers had taken nearly naps enough all

around, and Bayard Hunter was half way home with his load of papers and letters, when Piney, who had hurried a little in eating his noon luncheon, returned to the schoolroom. He had opened his desk for a book, and was shutting the lid down again, when he saw Kyle Wilbur coming in and taking his seat.

"Coming to school this afternoon, are you?" said Piney.

"Guess I am. If we fellows should stay and play ball again, now that there cousin of yours has cleared out, they'd whale us."

"That's it, is it? Well, how'll you feel on examination?"

"Guess I'm ready for all we're likely to get. Besides, I can answer a pile of questions, if they'll only ask me the right ones."

"But, s'pose they don't?"

"Then, I hope they won't ask me any. How's a fellow to remember a thing for two or three months, I'd like to know, and answer questions on it? I can't."

"That's about what we come to school for, though," said Piney.

"Well," said Kyle, with energy, "I wish I could hit a question in 'rithmetic the way that there city cousin of yours hits a ball. I'd just knock it clean out of the 'cademy."

"There's nothing like knowing how," said Piney.
"Can he pitch?"

"Pitch? Well, Frank Jones says he doesn't want to catch for him again till his hands get over it."

Bi had earned a reputation.

CHAPTER XV.

EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY.

BI was a good post-boy. He took the pains to assort his mail before reaching the house, so that he was able to deliver each person's share at once.

"Any letters, Mary?" asked aunt Sarah.

"Not one, mother; but we shall have plenty to read."

"I should say so."

Perhaps the quantity and other peculiarities of Mary's "mail" might have drawn out more remarks if all the others had not been so very busy with letters and things of their own. Besides, it was nearly dinner-time; and she was able to smuggle the whole lot up stairs, with the remark that she would attend to them by and by. The dinner-table itself was a busy place, and full of talk; for the base-ball game, and the village, and the news from town, and even the morning walk and the Indians, had to be discussed. Mary did not seem to be in any sort of hurry to get off; and it was a full half-hour after

dinner, before she slipped away from the rest, and found her way again to her own room.

There they lay on the bed, all those papers and pamphlets. It was curious that the latter should all have their leaves carefully cut open, so there should be less trouble in reading them. It was just so with a couple of novels that came along with the magazines, and Mary noticed it.

“Every one of them,” she said to herself, but she did not seem inclined to say any thing more. And, what was odder still, she took both of the novels in her hands, went to the window, and sat down; and then, instead of reading either of the books, she just sat still and stared out at the lake.

Grandfather Hunter and uncle Liph, and aunt Sarah and Piney’s mother, went for a drive in the carryall soon after dinner. Aunt Keziah had a great deal to do about the house; and Roxy and Susie got hold of some old picture-books, — a great heap of them, — twice as many as they could get through in one day.

Bi was left entirely to his own resources, therefore, as Piney could not be expected home until nearly four o’clock. He declared to himself that he was not sorry at all, and took Piney’s advice. He got out his rod and fishing-tackle, and dug some bait, and started for the lake. That was the last anybody at the house saw of him that afternoon.

When Piney did at last come home, and asked after him, and when aunt Keziah told him, he exclaimed, —

“Gone a-fishing, has he? Well, I’m just glad of it. I’m going right up-stairs to my room.”

“Why, Piney, you ain’t sick?”

“I’m pretty nigh sick of algebra. One of these problems has about stuck me. I can’t make it go, and I can’t give it up.”

“Don’t you do it, Piney!”

“I won’t. S’pose I got it put to me on examination? Besides, I’ll tell you what, aunt Kezi, I ain’t a-going to let myself be whipped, anyhow, by a lot of mere equations and roots and things.”

“That’s you, Piney. That’s you,” said she earnestly. “Don’t you ever give up to any sort of thing, not so long as you live.”

She, herself, was one of those people who do not give up very easily; and Piney’s rosy face looked, at that moment, as if he were in a fair way to become another of them. They are a very useful kind of people.

“I’ll beat it,” said Piney.

“Stick to it,” she responded; but her hand was upon his shoulder now, and she was looking straight into his eyes. It was the best sort of encouragement for a young fellow like him; and when he hurried up-stairs, book in hand, there was very little

chance left for a victory over Piney Hunter by that problem in algebra.

During all those hours of that summer afternoon, Bi had been having the boat to himself, and the whole lake too, for that matter; for there was nobody but himself to be seen upon it. Somehow or other, however, after he found himself floating off, all alone and independent, he did not seem to care whether he caught any fish or not.

"I don't believe they bite much at this time of day," he muttered, as he leaned over and looked down into the water. "Besides, it's better fun to kind o' just paddle along and see things."

It was a quiet kind of fun; but there was plenty of it, and it did not call for any very hard work. The scow slipped along over the water quite easily. Every now and then Bi ceased rowing entirely, and let her float.

There was no work at all in drifting and looking about him. Away up, over his head, a great hen-hawk was sailing around in wide, slow circles, watching the earth for prey of some sort. Some crows were cawing along the opposite shore. On a dead limb of a tree, that leaned out from the nearest bank, sat a kingfisher peering down into the water. A little farther on, he could see three good-sized snapping-turtles, sunning themselves all upon the same half-sunken log. Twice already he had seen

a muskrat put his nose above the water, and he had wondered what it could be.

"There!" he suddenly exclaimed. "That pickerel sprang clean out of the water. Must have been after a fly. Isn't this great now? Why, I'm drifting away down the lake."

So he was; and that did not mean that he was drifting very far, for the lake was little more than a mile long, and hardly more than half as wide. It was very irregular in shape; and there was quite a stretch of marsh, with bushes and flags growing all over it, at the southern end. That was where Piney had told Bi there was always good rabbit-hunting in winter; and he now took his oars again, and pulled away to have a look at it.

There was no need for him to over-exert himself; and pretty soon he came to a sort of opening in the long line of the marsh, and it seemed almost a matter of course that he should steer the scow right in. It grew narrower as he went on, until it was little more than a hundred feet wide.

"There!" he exclaimed at last. "I guess I know what this is. It's where the river goes out. I'll push right along down, and see what I'll come to."

It was grand fun now. Bi hardly ever before felt more thoroughly excited. It seemed to him a good deal as if he had discovered that river, and was the

first man to row a boat into it. He thought of Hendrik Hudson, and De Soto, and Christopher Columbus, and John C. Frémont, and a great many other explorers.

“What fun it would be to find the north pole!” he said to himself. “Only I’d like to go there in June, and be sure of getting back home in time for supper.”

A great many people would like to travel, and discover things, if they could arrange their trips in some such way as that; but it can’t be done very well, — not, at least, until we invent something faster than steamships and express-trains. They are so dreadfully slow! If one could but travel by telegraph, now!

It was soon altogether plain to Bi, that he had really made his way out into the river; for the water now ran pretty fast, and it was shallow, especially in some places.

“I wonder if this wouldn’t be a good spot to fish in,” he said to himself. “It’s wonderfully lonely.”

Bi had hit it. That was one of the best fishing-grounds around the lake at that time of day; and hardly anybody knew it, or went there to spoil it. He was not much of a fisherman; but the fish themselves took care of that matter, and he was fairly delighted with his success. To be sure, he caught a great many “shiners” not more than eight

inches long, and bullheads and pumpkin-seeds. Then up came a sucker that weighed nearly a pound. After that, there were some pretty good yellow perch, and the largest bullhead he had seen since his arrival. Then he was puzzled woefully, for his next capture was an eel of the liveliest sort. Such a wriggler as that eel had never before been in Bi's hands. Hardly was he over the side of the boat before he had himself all tangled up in the line, and he refused to lie still anywhere. He had no idea of permitting the hook to be taken out of his mouth. He had got that hook, and he meant to keep it, much as Bi wanted it.

"I never want to catch another like you," said Bi to his prize. "Be quiet, won't you! There, I've got my foot on him."

That was about the only way he could have done it, and it was by no means easy then. Still it was done; and, the moment the hook was out, that eel seemed to get over all the bottom of the boat in a twinkling.

"They're good to eat," said Bi; "but I wish I knew how to bait my hook so they wouldn't touch it."

That was one secret he did not know, however; and it might be doubted if even Piney could have told him, or any other country boy. Three times more, before he pulled up the anchor of his boat,

he was forced to bother himself ever so long with the task of taking off an eel. He hurt his fingers too, a little, on some of his bullheads; but he did not mind that so much.

"Guess I've hurt them worse'n they have me," he said; "and I've pulled in a lot of 'em. Don't I wish Piney could have come with me! Wonder if he knows any thing about this place."

He did not know much about Piney Hunter, or he never would have said that. There was not a corner of any of those lakes that Piney was not familiar with.

At last the young fisherman discovered that his bait had disappeared. The last worm was gone, and that was the end of it; but he had a comfortable feeling that he had made a fairly good use of them.

"Five o'clock!" he exclaimed, as he stared at his watch. "Well, I've used up this afternoon at a great rate. I guess I'd better start for the house, but I needn't be in any hurry about it. Shouldn't wonder if my face were a little sunburned, by the way it feels."

Sunburned? He should have had a glass to look at it in. He looked more like a near relation of Piney Hunter than he had ever before in all his life. The sun and the bright water had been doing their best for him; and perhaps Piney himself was indebted to them for a fair share of his brilliant

complexion. They and the winds are deadly enemies of all palenesses, and you only need give them a fair opportunity.

Bi Hunter rowed the old scow very leisurely out of the river, and into the lake and homeward. He drew near the landing at last, and there were Roxy and Susie waiting for him. They had wearied of their pile of picture-books, and were out for a romp.

"Cousin Bi," shouted Roxy, "it's almost supper-time, and I was afraid you had lost yourself."

"Oh, no!" said he, as he pulled to the landing. "I didn't lose myself, but I went and found some fish."

"What?" exclaimed Roxy. "Can you catch fish? I wouldn't have thought you could. Susie told me nobody ever caught any in the city."

"No," said Susie, "they don't. We buy all our fish ready caught. It doesn't take half so long as it does to catch them."

"What do you think of that?" asked Bi, as they peered into the boat.

"Why," said Roxy, "you've caught some eels. — Look at 'em, Susie. They're just like snakes, and they'll slip right away from you if you pick them up."

"They're awful," said Susie. "I don't want to pick them up."

“Wait, Bi,” said Roxy. “I’ll run to the house for a pan.”

“Yes, please do.”

She was off already, like a little curly-headed flash; and she was back again with her pan by the time he had fastened his boat, and began to pick over his fish.

“How can I ever pick up those eels?” he exclaimed doubtfully.

“Oh! it’s just as easy. Piney picks ’em right up.”

“I’d like to know how he does it.”

“Why, anybody knows that. He just gets his hands all covered with sand, and then the eels don’t slip. It’s because they slip so, that you can’t catch ’em: that’s all.”

“Sand?” said Bi. “And I never once thought of it. Why, of course it’ll do it.”

Sand was the correct thing to handle eels with, truly; but he discovered that they had to be gripped pretty tightly even then. He was a proud boy when he showed his afternoon “luck” in the kitchen.

“Where’s Piney? I want him to see ’em,” he said to aunt Keziah.

“He’s up-stairs, at work on his algebray. I’ll call him. He’s been at it long enough.”

Piney came down when he was sent for; but his first words to aunt Keziah were, —

“Well, I don’t care, I’ve whipped that problem.”

“Have you?”

“O Piney!” shouted Roxy, “come and look at Bi’s eels.”

The tough mathematics had to go their own way after that, except that Piney remarked to Bi, —

“I had something to get hold of that was twice as slippery as they were. Took all the sand I had.”

It isn’t every boy that has “sand” enough in his grip to stick to and capture an ugly thing in his algebra.

There was a good deal to be said about the river, and the secret sort of place where all those fish were caught; and it was not nearly all said when the bell rang for supper. Bi knew it was supper-time a good while before he heard any bell.

CHAPTER XVI.

GREAT TRIALS COMING.

TUESDAY and Wednesday of that week passed very quietly indeed, but very pleasantly, at the farmhouse. The older people from the city had come away out there for a rest, and seemed inclined to take it as completely as they could, now they were there. The younger people found plenty of things to amuse themselves with, out of doors and in; and there was not much that looked like "rest" in the way in which they went about it. Every now and then Roxy found an occasion for saying, —

"I don't care. Just wait till Piney's vacation gets here!" but precisely what wonders were likely to happen then, she did not attempt to unfold.

He himself was all the while wrestling away with his preparations for the dreaded examination. They used up his time so that he told Kyle Wilbur there had been no chance for him to practise his piece for the exhibition.

"I've just worked at mine," said Kyle, with a

long sigh. "I dreamed I was blown up last night. What do you think it really was?"

"Can't guess," said Piney.

"Why, you know how it is in the piece. I'd been looking round for my father, to ask if I'd got to stay on that burning deck any longer, till I'd just rolled myself out of bed. Bumped my head on the floor, awful, and waked up all the folks."

"Better'n being blown up, anyhow," said Piney. "You knew just where you was."

There was a great deal of solid truth in that.

As for Bi, he had to do a good deal of taking care of himself, and he rather liked it. He went over to the village, on both of those days, to get the mail, and to have a game of base-ball; and he found himself getting to be a sort of old acquaintance among the boys on the green. It was remarkable how well they all seemed to know him by even the end of Tuesday's game. When he reached the post-office on Wednesday, he found his sister Mary waiting for him.

"Hullo, Mary!" he remarked. "What did you come for?"

"Oh! I thought I'd take a walk. I've sorted the letters and papers, and I've taken out all mine. You can carry the rest."

"Do you care to have a walk around the village?"

"No, Bi. I think I'd as lief go home. It'll be dinner-time before we get there."

"Oh! there's time enough. But then, there isn't much to see in the village: it's awful small."

"Yes, it's very small."

"Sha'n't I carry your mail for you, Mary? There's a lot of it."

"No, thank you. I can carry it. We're not in the city."

"No," said Bi a little slyly; "but some of our city friends remember us when we're away. That is, some of yours do. Not one of all my lady friends has sent me a single paper."

"It's too bad," said Mary. "Hadn't you better write to some of them about it?"

Somehow or other it occurred to Bi, after that, that he had never known his sister to say less, during the same length of time, than she did while they were walking back to the house. It may have been just as well, too, considering how many things he himself had to talk about. Bi was beginning to learn something about the country, and he was ready to give his sister a full account of his discoveries.

"To-morrow'll be a good day," he said, as they got to the gate. "Piney's going to have the whole day to himself."

"Is he? Where do you think he and you will go?"

"Well, I don't exactly know. Guess we'll make a good long trip out somewhere."

"That'll be splendid," said Mary; but she said it in a way that sounded as if she half hoped the "trip" might be a long one indeed. It was queer, for she could not have any good reason for wishing to be rid of those boys.

A good many calculations had been made, as to what was to be done with that Thursday. Piney had determined to give up his books at last, and devote himself to his cousins all day long.

"We'd have a haying-time," he said; "but the clover-field is all in, and they won't begin cutting the big field till next week. Then I'll show you some fun. Bi and I are going to the upper lakes. We may be gone all day."

Once again Mary seemed to feel and express an uncommon amount of pleasure over that very simple fact.

The sun set in the usual place on Wednesday, but Piney shook his head when he saw him going down the last few yards of sky.

"Too many red clouds," he said to himself. "I guess I wouldn't care to have too much hay out in my field to-morrow, if I had one. Still it may come off pleasant. All kinds of signs fail in a dry time."

So they do, but not always. When the people awoke next morning, at the farmhouse, it was not

the sunshine that awakened them. Not a bit was there to do it. They were waked by the heavy patter of rain upon the shingles of the roof; and, the moment aunt Keziah looked out of her window, she exclaimed, —

“I thought so! That’s just what I said it would do. It won’t clear up before the middle of the afternoon, if it does then.”

At the breakfast-table the people generally were somewhat still and quiet at first; and Roxy felt called upon to remark, —

“I don’t know what on earth we’ll do with you all to-day. Aunt Keziah says it’s just awful to have so many people rained in, at once, in one house.”

“So it is,” said aunt Sarah. “Elizabeth, what shall we do with the children? Picture-books?”

“I’ll fix ’em,” said Piney. “We’ll make a good day of it, rain or no rain.”

“What can you do?” asked his mother.

“Do? Why, mother, there’s the garret. There’s more fun there than we could use up in a week. — May we have the garret, aunt Keziah?”

“Have it? I should say so! You may turn it all out on the roof, if you’ll only keep those children out of the kitchen, and out of mischief. Take Bi and Mary up there too and find them something to play with.”

“And keep us out of mischief,” remarked Bi.

"It'll be splendid!" exclaimed Mary. "Things must have been gathering up there for ever and ever so long."

"Ever since the house was built," said aunt Keziah. "I mean, ever since the first log house was built, right where this one stands now."

"The garret wasn't here then, was it?" said Bi.

"No, but some of the things in it were. This part of the house was built a good deal later than that part. What we call the garret is only the upper part of the old house that took the place of the log cabin. People used to say it was haunted."

"Haunted?" exclaimed Susie. "Oh, aunt Keziah! was it really?"

"Yes, it was dreadfully, till we got the right kind of a cat. She cleared 'em all out."

"All the ghosts?"

"All the only kind of ghosts we ever had in that garret. If you put cheese and things into any room you've got, the rats and mice'll come there."

"That's so," said Bi. "They'll haunt it."

Both he and Susie had looked at the rain ruefully enough that morning, but the mention of the garret set their spirits all a-going again. Even cousin Mary had seemed a little "blue," until she heard her aunts and her mother discussing the relics of ancient times, stored away in the queer old place Piney proposed to explore.

"I say, Mary," he remarked, "you'd better wear your old clothes. The garret's got as much dust in it as there is on the south road. We'll be a nice-looking lot, all round, before we get through with it."

Roxy was inclined to wonder a little at the turn things were taking. The garret had always been a sort of forbidden field to her and Chub. It was an enchanted island which they were never permitted to land upon. They had, indeed, been taken ashore there two or three times, but not to explore, and not to remain long enough to know much about it.

"O Susie!" she exclaimed. "I'd rather play in that garret than anywhere else in the world. We can take our dolls up there."

"Our dolls? What for?"

"Why, to dress 'em up. There's just the splendorous lot of old clothes up there you never saw!"

So, not a great while after breakfast, Piney was ready, and led the way, and all the rest were ready to follow him. Back through the sitting-room and dining-room, and into the kitchen, they went in a noisy procession.

"This is the old part of the house," he said to Bi. "The stairs go up into the garret from the entry, beyond that door in the corner."

"Why, is the garret only in the second story?"

"Second? Why, there's only a story and a quar

ter out here. The house is only two stories anywhere. But you never climbed steeper stairs in all your life."

"That's a fact," said Bi, when the door was opened. "They're more like a ladder than stairs."

"I'll look out for Chub," said cousin Mary. "What a pokerish flight of stairs they are! Were they always as bad as this?"

"Well," said Piney, "great-grandfather Hunter didn't have any thing but a ladder. The log house he built here was a kind of fort too. The Indians attacked it once while he was in it."

"I've heard of that," said Mary. "It was in the Indian War, wasn't it?"

"No, it wasn't any war exactly, but they'd quarrelled with him. They were pretty near neighbors of his in those days. They weren't always good ones, either. Onondagas all around him, and no Reservation."

"It's a wonder there was any preservation," said Mary, as she slowly climbed the stairs, and helped Chub to clamber up, one step at a time, beside her.

If the stairs were pokerish, so was the garret, when they all got into it. There were two windows, to be sure, at the back end, and there had been two more in front; but the latter had been darkened forever when the rest of the house was built against them, and the others had not been washed for many

a long day. That darkened them a good deal; but they had been glazed, in the first place, with small panes of greenish, old-fashioned glass. As for the room itself, the roof above was all the ceiling it could boast of, with the rafters uncovered; and the rain was now pattering dismally upon the shingles.

"Cousin Mary," exclaimed Roxy, "can you spin? Aunt Keziah can. That's a spinning-wheel."

"Why, there are three or four of them," said Mary. "And that must be a part of an old loom. Mother says that grandmother Merrill—that's aunt Keziah's mother—made all the linen and woollen cloth she used, till she was forty years old."

"Yes," said Roxy; "and she made the beautiful rag carpet in the dining-room. Piney says it's a regular B'ustles carpet."

"Oh, but, Bi!" shouted Piney, as he pulled something out of a corner, "do you see that?"

"Why, it's a cavalry sabre. It's a good deal crookeder than they make 'em now."

"Crooked as a scythe. That came from a trooper in Burgoyne's army, in the Revolution."

"Did he have any cavalry?"

"I can't say 'bout that, but then there's the sword. Here's another."

The second prize was a straight, brass-handled affair, with a three-cornered blade and no sharp edges.

"It's a sticker," said Bi.

"It's what the British infantry sergeants used to wear. Tip-top for toasting bacon on."

"Hullo, Piney, what a gun that is! I never saw such a long barrel, and the muzzle of it flares out like a young bugle. Flint-lock too: ain't it heavy, though!"

"That's a bell-muzzled fowling-piece. It was aunt Keziah's great-uncle had it first. Our folks used that sort of thing at Bunker Hill. They're great for ducks and geese. You can cram in any amount of big shot."

"I'd say you could," said Bi; and their hands were red with rust before they finished admiring that marvellous old gun.

The rest were having just as good a time as the boys. Roxy was whirling one of the great wooden spinning-wheels, to Susie's great delight; and Chub was pulling all sorts of things out of all the corners.

"Piney," said Bi, "what's in all those chests?"

"You couldn't begin to guess. All of great-grandmother's clothes, and some of grandmother's, and lots of other things. Some of 'em are real pretty too."

"O Piney!" shouted Roxy. "That's what we want. Open 'em, and let me and Susie dress up our dolls."

"All right," said Piney; and in a few moments more the floor was littered with ancient treasures of millinery and dressmaking, and the children were going wild over their discoveries. Mary Hunter had done very little, until then, except to keep a sharp eye towards the head of the stairs and on Chub's movements; but the contents of those chests had an attraction for her. Besides, she had enough of her father's liking for antiquities to add to her interest; and the fun grew rapidly.

She helped Susie and Roxy dress their dolls; and when their toilets were done, they were a sight to make a cat laugh.

Those chests did not include all the treasures of the garret, by any means. There were cases of old account-books, and papers of all sorts, belonging to long-ago business affairs.

There were old hats and bonnets. One large hair-covered trunk was almost full of old tools; and Piney and Bi ransacked them with a will, wondering what some of them had ever been used for. Hour after hour went by, until at last Piney suddenly exclaimed, —

"Now, cousin Mary, let's all dress up, and go down-stairs."

"What fun!" said Mary. "We'll do it. We'll dress the children too, and carry the dolls with us."

They went at it enthusiastically, and a wonder-

ful set of guys they made of themselves. Perhaps the funniest figure of all — funnier than even the dolls — was Chub, in an old army-uniform coat that almost covered him up. As for Mary, she had arrayed herself in a green-silk dress, which had been her great-grandmother's, and had been an elegant garment in its day. She had found and put on a huge coal-scuttle bonnet, tied a very liberal yellow sash around her waist, covered her plump hands with a pair of dingy-black "elbow gloves;" and then all she needed to complete her apparel was the very pair of horn-rimmed spectacles which Piney fished up for her out of the tool-chest. Roxy and Susie were also rigged out in a manner which left nothing at all to ask for; and Piney and Bi had done their very best for their own outfit.

When all was ready, the only remaining difficulty that beset them was how they should ever get down those steep stairs, with all that rigging to manage, and not tumble at least half the way. Bi and Piney engineered it for them, however, in spite of all the queer toggery. It was a special job for them; for Bi had girded himself with the sabre, and Piney was armed with the straight sword and the bell-mouthed fowling-piece.

They gathered in the entry for a moment, after they all reached the foot of the stairs in safety, and finished their masquerading preparations. Mary

carried Roxy's great rag-doll in her arms; and there had never before been seen such a procession, in that house or any other, as they made when they marched on through the kitchen and into the dining-room. They did not find anybody there, as they had expected; and Mary said, in a voice half choked with laughter, —

“They must all be in the front parlor. Let's walk right in.”

“Forward, march!” said Piney.

On they went accordingly; and they found the old folk in the parlor, sure enough. Grandfather Hunter was there, and uncle Liph and aunt Sarah, and Piney's mother and aunt Keziah; and there, with them, was a tall, pleasant-looking gentleman, who sprang to his feet, as the procession entered the room, exclaiming, —

“Bless me!”

There was no help for it. Everybody had to laugh, — even the strange gentleman, although Roxy said afterwards that she was sure she saw him trying hard not to.

“Or else,” she said, “he was trying to eat up his handkerchief.”

Mary Hunter forgot that she was carrying the rag-baby; for she let it drop on the floor, just as she was saying, —

“Mr. Sadler! When did you come?”

He stepped forward very politely indeed, and replied, —

“I wanted to see your father on some important business. I came in by the stage, and had myself driven right over. It is a very rainy day, Miss Hunter.”

All that while, his face was growing more and more nearly the color of Piney's own; and so was that of cousin Mary. All the room around and behind them was one riot of noise and fun; and it made less difference what they said, for nobody was paying them any particular attention.

CHAPTER XVII.

IT NEVER RAINS BUT IT POURS.

MARY HUNTER said something or other in reply to Mr. Sadler, but she did not say it very distinctly. She stooped and picked up the rag-baby; and, when she arose, she stepped forward with it in her arms, in a very stately way, and sat down in a big rocking-chair.

Mr. Sadler also found a chair, and sat down; and then Bi Hunter thought he never heard his sister talk faster. She had opportunity enough, for all the rest of the room was in fits of laughter over the children.

"Uncle Liph," said Roxy, "don't you see? Susie and I are both our grandmothers."

"No, we're their mothers," said Susie.

"And Chub is George Washington," said Roxy; "and he's been telling fibs, and cutting down trees with his hatchet."

"My doll's been bad," said Susie, holding her up to be looked at. "She's put on her Sunday bon-

net ; and it's a rainy day, and it'll be spoiled before she gets home from meeting."

"My doll's going to soldier," said Chub, as Bi tried to fasten the belt of the sabre around his little waist. "If he's bad, I'll sword him."

"What a mess you must have made in that garret!" remarked aunt Keziah ; but Piney said, —

"Yes, it's dreadful. The dust won't settle again in a week. — I say, Bi, how does that hat feel? It isn't exactly a city hat."

"No," said Bi, "it isn't. I wonder where it was made."

"It's real beaver. They used to catch plenty of 'em around here."

"And make hats of their skins?"

"That's about all they trapped 'em for. They trapped 'em all out, but nobody wears beaver hats now."

"I don't see how they could very well," said uncle Liph, "now the beavers are all killed. There can't be many left anywhere."

"Not enough for the hat business," said grandfather. "But then there are plenty of silkworms."

"Do worms make hats?" asked Roxy.

"They make silk," said Bi. "Men wear silk hats nowadays."

"I wish they didn't," laughed uncle Liph. "They're almost as bad as helmets."

"What's a hellamet?" asked Roxy.

"It's an iron hat. When you come to see me, I'll show you one."

"An iron hat!" she exclaimed. "Oh, dear me! How they must hurt!"

"But then, Roxy," said Susie, "they didn't ever wear out, and they didn't bend out of shape if anybody sat down on them."

"It's pretty near dinner-time," said aunt Keziah. "Mary, my grandmother never came to the dinner-table with her bonnet on."

"Then, I'll go and put mine away," said Mary. "Mr. Sadler will excuse my leaving him."

"Certainly," replied Mr. Sadler; and then he looked like a man who could not think of any thing more he wanted to say just then.

"Come on, Bi," said Piney. "If my face is as dusty as yours, we'd both better try some soap and water."

That was what the children needed particularly; and they were all marched out of the parlor, not forgetting their dusty dolls.

Piney and Bi were back again in the parlor before the rest; and, when Mary Hunter came in, Piney leaned over to Bi, and whispered, —

"Isn't she pretty! I never saw her look so well before."

The children must also have noticed Mary's good

looks ; for, when Mr. Sadler took Roxy on his knee, just before the dinner-bell rang, she said to him, —

“Mr. Sadler, don’t you think Mary’s nicer without her owl-eyes?”

“Her owl-eyes? Oh! the spectacles.”

“Yes; but Piney says those kind of spectacles are owl-eyes.”

“I guess Piney’s right,” said Mr. Sadler.

“I guess he is,” began Roxy; but cousin Mary remarked suddenly, as she arose to sit down in another chair a little farther off, —

“So I looked like a owl, did I?”

“In a green silk dress and a big bonnet,” shouted Susie. “That’s it. Mary was a grandmother owl.”

Piney was aware of having an idea that Mr Sadler was glad to have the dinner-bell ring just then. He and Bi were, at all events.

That was a merry dinner-party, in spite of the rain that was still pouring down over every thing out of doors. Uncle Liph seemed to be in uncommonly high spirits; and grandfather Hunter told funny stories of how the ladies and gentlemen were dressed on the day of his wedding, long ago.

“They made a great fuss over such things then,” said aunt Keziah. “Nobody ever thinks of having a big wedding nowadays.”

“Times change,” said grandfather.

“Yes, they do,” snapped aunt Keziah; “but

there's no need of every thing else changing. A wedding ought not to be just an every-day affair."

"No," said Mr. Sadler vacantly, "not every day. I think once in a lifetime would be quite enough for me."

"I don't," chirped Roxy. "I think it's beautiful to have company in the house."

The people around that table seemed ready to laugh at almost any thing, but Piney felt a little sober over the prospects of keeping them amused for the rest of the day. What should he or could he contrive to keep them all busy?

He need not have troubled himself at all about Roxy and Susie and Chub; for they were almost ready to give up their pie at once, in order to get back the sooner to their dolls, and all those wonderful old dresses and things. Cousin Mary herself began to help them after dinner; but aunt Sarah made her stop, and go into the parlor to play the piano and sing. That, however, was after Mr. Sadler had had a talk about business with uncle Liph.

"Is it any thing serious?" aunt Sarah asked, when uncle Liph met her in the hall; and he said to her, with a queer, comical sort of smile, —

"It's a little serious, my dear; but it isn't very bad. I think we must keep Sadler here for a few days. I'll have a talk with you about the business, by and by."

Aunt Sarah smiled too, as if she were glad there was nothing serious, and would be pleased to have Mr. Sadler visit at the farmhouse.

“Bi,” said Piney, as soon as he saw how nicely every thing was going on without his help, “let’s you and I play chess. I’ve a set of men and a board.”

“I’m ready. Chess is just the thing for a rainy day.”

The board and men were got out, and the two boys worked at it in a corner of the back parlor until about the middle of the afternoon. Then there came a sound of much giggling, and of rustling silk on the hall-stairs; and Piney said, —

“Checkmate in two moves, Bi. Let’s go and see what’s up.”

“All right,” said Bi. “You can beat me, anyhow. I must get me a book, and study up my openings.”

It was time to go, for something was about to happen; and, as usual, Roxy was at the bottom of it. Piney felt sure of that, but he could not have guessed just what it would be.

A little while before that, Roxy had suddenly dropped her doll, exclaiming, —

“O Susie! I haven’t practised my piece since you came.”

“Your piece? What’s that?”

"Why, it's for the exhibition next Saturday. Didn't you know I went to school to the 'cademy?"

"Why, you don't go with Piney."

"Sometimes I do, but not in the last week. I don't go reg'lar, but I'm to speak my piece reg'lar."

That was about the truth of the matter; for Roxy had arranged it all, without any older help, with the young-lady "principal" of the female department of the academy.

"Well," said Susie, "why don't you speak it now? and Chub and I'll hear you."

"Yes; but I don't mean to speak it up here. I'm going to dress up, and go and speak it in the parlor to all the folks."

"Why, Roxy, how will you dress up? Is it that kind of a piece?"

"It's 'The breaking waves,'" said Roxy gravely; "and it's the best piece in the world. Aunt Keziah wanted me to learn another, but I wanted 'The breaking waves.'"

"I never heard it," said Susie.

"Didn't you? Don't they know it in the city? Well, cousin Mary left that green-silk dress on the floor in her room, and she threw the big bonnet away in the corner."

"Are the spectacles there?"

"No: they're scattered out into the hall, I guess.

But I don't want them: I only want the dress and the bonnet."

Susie was quite ready to help in an affair of that kind, and Chub danced all around them while Roxy put on the things. She was all but hidden under so much dress and bonnet; and Susie said, —

"Long trails are just the fashion; but you'll have the longest, longest trail in all the world."

It was quite likely that she had; that is, for any lady of her size.

The older people had once more seated themselves comfortably in the front parlor, just as Susie and Roxy came down the stairs; and Mr. Sadler was spreading out some new music upon the piano. It was some he had brought with him from the city; and he was just remarking, —

"That is very old, but it is sweet. It is 'The Rainy Day,'" when he was interrupted by the voice of Roxy, in the middle of the room behind him, —

"The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods against a stormy sky
Their giant branches tost,
And the heavy night tongue dark
The hills and water sore" —

But, at that point, Roxy was interrupted by peals of laughter all around the room. Cousin Mary,

too, had covered her own face with both hands, exclaiming, —

“Oh, dear me! How absurd I must have looked!”

Roxy looked behind her.

“Chub, you naughty boy, get off my trail. You make them all laugh. It’ll just spoil my piece.”

There was danger of it; for there he was, “tetering” on the skirt of the green-silk dress, upon his tiptoes, and poking out his little hands in imitation of Roxy’s energetic gestures as she “spoke.”

He ceased for a moment, and she turned around and tried to go on; but Chub only stepped off the trail to come in front of her, and put his fat rosy face away inside of the scoop-shovel bonnet. All that the rest could hear then was something about “the wild New-England shore.”

Roxy herself began to laugh, for it was all too comical for any thing else; but she was a little vexed about her piece, and she said, —

“Now, mamma, I could say it if Chub would keep away.”

“Come here, Chub,” said his mother.

“Oh, yes!” exclaimed cousin Mary. “Do let us have the whole of it. Go right on, Roxy dear.”

“I’ll go on,” said Roxy; “but I guess you couldn’t speak very well, with somebody all the time poking his face under your bonnet.”

If anybody could have looked around that parlor, just then, it would have puzzled him to say who was laughing the hardest. Cousin Mary laughed so hard that it made her red in the face; and the color came back, again and again, after she stopped laughing.

The applause, such as it was, encouraged Roxy to go on; and she recited the whole of "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers," with only here and there an omission or so, and a few changes of the words.

It is very possible, that, if one of the Pilgrim Fathers himself had undertaken to repeat those verses, or any others, with that dress and bonnet on, and before such an audience, he would have skipped or changed something before he got through.

Piney was asked for a recital of his own "piece;" but he replied, —

"Well, no, I guess not. It's bad enough to have to speak it on the platform at the exhibition. Hawk-nose John would be the best man to do it, though. I wish he'd agree to take my place."

"Why not the Woodchuck? Wouldn't he do as well?" asked Mary.

"Well, no, I don't think he would. I guess nobody ever followed him very far for any thing; unless it was his wife, when he didn't bring home her berry-money."

CHAPTER XVIII.

EXAMINATION-DAY.

FRIDAY of that week had been looked forward to by all the boys of the academy, a good deal as all such days must be, with mixed feelings. They had their hopes about it, and they had their fears.

There was more than a little fear afloat concerning the way things would go at the examination, and then there were hopes of getting through it fairly well. There were some who dared to say that perhaps it might not turn out such an awful kind of a day, after all.

It was sure to be a long one, for all the days of June are long. If the rest of the boys were like Piney Hunter, there was a good deal of early rising that morning. He began at first, as soon as he was up and dressed, to turn over the leaves of his school-books; but he shut them up again, remarking to himself, —

“It’s of no sort of use. I couldn’t read ten lines if I should try. Come on, Bi: let’s go and have a

good swim and a pull around the lake, before breakfast."

It was very early for Bi, but he was quickly ready ; and they both were glad to find the morning so fresh and smiling, considering all that was coming. All the grass and trees looked greener than ever, after the great rain. The sky had a remarkably clear, clean tint of blue ; and the lake was "elegant," as they declared.

They did not try to catch any fish ; and Piney said, —

"The teachers'll find plenty of bullheads and suckers in their classes to-day. Kyle Wilbur and some of the other boys mean to try and play eels."

"Perhaps the teachers may catch them at it," said Bi, "and put some sand in their hands."

"Well, yes ; but even then they couldn't get a very tight hold on boys like Kyle. They ought to have put sand on him all through the term. Just so with half the rest : they're an awful slippery lot."

"Shall I go over to the academy when you do?" asked Bi.

"You might if you wanted to, but you'd find it the dullest kind of work. Grandpa and Uncle Liph said they were going. Mother always goes, to see how I come out ; and I guess aunt Keziah and your mother'll be pretty sure to go with her."

“They won’t be playing ball to-day, I s’pose. Most of ’em won’t feel like it.”

“Well, no, they won’t; but it’s about the only thing some of ’em could stand being examined on.”

“Tell you what, then. I’ll wait, and walk over with Mary when she goes. Never you mind about me.”

There was a mistaken idea in Bi Hunter’s mind as to what his sister was likely to do with herself that day, and as to her requiring his company to the village or anywhere else.

For some reason or other, she seemed inclined to spend a good deal of time in her room. Mr. Sadler accompanied uncle Liph and the rest, when they went over; and Bi was carried along with the crowd. He thought he had never known a man to say less than Sadler did, all the way; and yet there did not seem to be any thing the matter with him,—he was cheerful.

Piney had heard aunt Keziah remark about him, before they set out from the house, —

“Like him? Of course I do. He’s attentive to old folks. He’s just the kind of man I like. Girls like Mary, now, don’t seem to take much to that kind of man. So much the worse for them: they’d ought to have more sense.”

Aunt Sarah replied to her, —

"Yes, Keziah; but Mr. Sadler is always kind and attentive to everybody. He is one of the best young men I know."

The great business of the day began in due season; and then, while Piney and his schoolmates were doing their best to find answers to the hard questions the teachers plied them with, Bi Hunter wandered all around the little town, from one place to another, declaring that he had never before known exactly what sort of thing a country village was. He had no trouble at all, anywhere; but a good deal of tribulation was caused at the academy by what Kyle Wilbur denounced vigorously to himself as "just the meanest trick that ever was played on a feller."

Instead of calling up the boys in their classes, according to the alphabetical order of their names upon the "roll-book," as had always been the custom, beginning with A, and using up the time before they get down to W—ilbur, all the names were written upon slips of paper, and folded up, one by one, and tumbled together loosely in a box. Then the teacher of that class picked out one paper after another, hit or miss, just as they came to his hand, and read the name on it out aloud; and that boy had to begin right away. It was worth while to see some of the faces the boys put on when they began to understand that "trick."

"It's just rough," muttered Bill Young; but before he had time to tell himself why, his name was called out, and he had to get up and go forward.

That was in geography, and Bill considered himself better posted in that branch of learning than in almost any thing else. Indeed, if the examining teacher had but stuck to the text-book, and asked Bill the questions in the printed form, he might possibly have come out of his trial with credit to himself and the academy. Even as it was, he did fairly well till he was asked, —

"What is the boundary-line between North and South America?"

"The Ohio River," said Bill, without a moment's hesitation; and he was not a little flustered by the laugh which followed. He hit the mark again, however, once or twice; and even when asked, "How would you describe the position of the State of Massachusetts on the map?" he did well, for he told them it was, —

"West of Cape Cod, east of Rhode Island, south of Maine, and north of Long Island Sound."

That was all very true; but he was suddenly bounced with, —

"Where is the equator?"

Bill knew; and he was as prompt as lightning, in spite of the nervous condition he was getting into.

"Right in the middle of the map."

"That will do, Master Young," said the examiner, as he picked up another slip of paper. "You may take your seat. — Kyle Wilbur."

Poor Kyle!

He had heard all the laughter at his friend's expense, and it had not at all improved his own condition for answering questions. He arose to his feet with a dim wish in his mind that he could see Piney Hunter's brindled heifer making a "charge" upon the whole academy "faculty;" but when all that was asked of him was the simple question, "What is Great Britain?" he told them all, very correctly, that it was "a large island near the coast of France."

"Not a doubt of it," remarked the examiner; "but how is it separated from the United States?"

"By the Revolutionary War and the Declaration of Independence."

"Well, yes; but the Atlantic Ocean has something to do with it, has it not?"

Kyle stood his ground like a hero.

"No, sir; for they stick to Canada, all the same."

He felt that he was getting adrift somehow; and he thought again of the brindled heifer, while the examiner finished a bad fit of coughing, and asked him, —

"Who were the human inhabitants of this continent at the time of its discovery?"

Of course he knew. He was sure he ought to be able to answer that question, but the right words were slow in coming to him. He looked at the ceiling, and hesitated just one instant; and then he heard the voice of Roxy Hunter, in a loud whisper, prompting him from the front seat where she sat between Mr. Sadler and aunt Keziah, — “Pilgrim Fathers, Kyle; Pilgrim Fathers;” and he almost mechanically repeated it after her, very loudly, —

“Pilgrim Fathers!”

Then the room had more laugh in it than even when Bill Young answered the equator question; and the examiner responded, —

“That will do, Master Wilbur. The young ladies in the audience will please show no favoritism.”

“I can recite the whole of it,” whispered Roxy to Mr. Sadler; “but I don’t believe Kyle can.”

The classes were all large, — much too large to admit of every boy or girl in them being called up to make mistakes in public; and Piney Hunter’s name seemed to be in no hurry to be drawn from among the little heaps of papers in the boxes. He did but march with the rest, from one room to another, as the examiners went on with the several classes of which he was a member. He drew long breaths of relief over each successive escape, but he felt sure that his turn was coming. All the

forenoon, therefore, he was little better than a mere looker-on, except for one short trial in Latin. The regular Latin "professor" happened to be sick that day, and the young man who took his place was every bit as bashful as Piney himself. As for the audience, the only person present who seemed to see any fun in Piney's translation of the selection given him was uncle Liph; and he only leaned over, and whispered to aunt Sarah, —

"Cæsar might have done worse in putting that into English."

Piney did not hear it, nor did the young man who had him in hand. At the noon recess, however, when he and the other boys met out on the green, he had to hear any number of complaints of what they all called his "good luck."

"It's just like you, Piney Hunter," said Kyle; "but your time'll come. Where'd you ha' been, anyhow, if that there feller'd known any thing 'bout Latin?"

"Or if they'd hauled you up on g'ography, like they did me?" added Bill Young.

"Or history," said one of the boys whose breakdown in that department of learning had been especially heavy. "What do you know about history?"

"Not much," replied Piney. "Seems to me I know less to-day than I ever did before in all my

life. I'm forgetting something or other every minute."

"You won't know much by three o'clock then, if you keep on," gravely remarked Kyle Wilbur.

When the bell called them in again, the class in algebra was the first one taken hold of. It was a large class, and the largest room in the academy was too small to hold both the scholars and their crowd of anxious friends.

Piney thought he had never seen any thing else wear quite so threatening an expression as did the great blackboard which covered one side of that room. It almost seemed to say to him, —

"Here I am. I've got you now!"

Just then the academy principal held up a slip of white paper, and read from it, in a loud and sonorous voice, —

"Master Richard Hunter."

"That's Piney," remarked Roxy to Mr. Sadler, in a voice so low and earnest that nobody in the room failed to hear it. All the peonies in aunt Keziah's tub were hardly so red as was their namesake's face when he walked forward to the blackboard, and picked up his piece of chalk. Another slip of paper was given to him; and on that was written the problem he was expected to work out — before all the crowd — upon that blackboard.

For almost a full minute, it seemed to him as if

he never had seen, at any time or anywhere, such letters and figures as there were on that wretched paper. Some of them stood for "plus," and some for "minus;" and there was also a hint of that dreadfully ridiculous and impossible invention, — a square root.

"There never was one," said Piney to himself, as he now stared at the blackboard. "All the roots I ever saw were round."

Some way or other, however, the marks and signs and letters were beginning to look more and more like old neighbors and familiar acquaintances. It occurred to him then that he had seen some of them somewhere. He knew very well that his mother and aunt Keziah, and all the rest from his house, were watching him very anxiously. He could feel their eyes on the back of his head, and he would not have turned around for any thing.

"I declare!" he suddenly said to himself. "If it isn't the very problem I had such a fight with the other night! Why, it's just the freshest thing to me in the whole book. I've got it on my finger-ends."

His heart gave a great jump, and the blackboard itself seemed to put on a more cheerful expression of countenance as Piney's bit of chalk began to fly over its surface. He worked with almost nervous rapidity, and his mother turned and looked very

proudly at aunt Keziah. The latter was at that moment completing a very long-drawn breath, as if she had been afraid of something, and was relieved about it.

Roxy whispered to Mr. Sadler, —

“That’s just like Piney. He’ll go and use up all the chalk;” but she was astonished to discover that he was looking out of the window at that moment, just as if there had been no examination going on.

Perhaps it was a little tiresome to him, and he deserved great credit for patiently sitting it out. Uncle Liph himself was not half so patient about it, and grandfather Hunter had not returned at all after the noon recess. Bi came in, however, just in time to hear Piney recite in grammar. As for Greek, and all that sort of thing, it had not yet made its way into the academy.

There were to be some prizes, as everybody knew, but they were not to be given out until the close of the exhibition next day; and, as soon as Piney’s last class was dismissed, he and his friends set out for home. The older people rode in the carryall; but, for reasons of his own, Mr. Sadler decided to walk with Piney and Bi.

“Do they teach book-keeping at the academy?” he asked, as they were leisurely strolling along.

“No,” said Piney; “but the scholars keep a good many of the books they draw from the library.”

"I see. Do they teach French or German, or any other of the modern languages?"

"Not one. I've picked up a little German from a man we had to work for us, but there's no one to teach it at the academy."

Mr. Sadler asked a good many other questions, with very much the same kind of answers; and then he drew a long whistle.

"Well, Richard," he said, — "or Piney, if you like that better, — a boy like you can learn all they teach in that academy, and then be just ready to learn something that'll be of use to him. What are you going to do with yourself when you get through?"

"Go to college."

"And what then?"

"Mr. Sadler," said Piney suddenly, "do you know what you'll be doing five or six years from now?"

"Well, perhaps not, exactly."

"No more do I. Next week'll be vacation, and there'll be two months of it. I wish I knew what I was going to do with it all. Bi's going to stay and help me get rid of part of it."

"I'll tell you what, then," said Mr. Sadler. "You come and spend a part of it in the city, and see if you can't learn a thing or two there."

"Just what I was thinking I'd like to do. Hullo! There are Chub and cousin Mary on the piazza."

So they were, and it almost looked as if Mary

were trying to go back into the house after something; but Chub tugged so hard at her dress that she had to give it up, and stay out there to welcome them home.

"I'll have another talk with you, Piney, before I go," said Mr. Sadler; and he added to himself, "Shouldn't wonder if something might be made out of him. Seems to be good stuff."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE EXHIBITION.

THAT was a lovely June evening, and Piney took out a whole scow-load of his visitors for a moonlight ride on the lake. Roxy and Susie were allowed to go; but Chub was put to bed, in spite of a vigorous protest on his own behalf.

"Mr. Sadler," said Mary, when they reached the landing, "will you take Roxy with you, in the stern of the boat? I will keep Susie with me, on the front seat."

"That'll trim the old scow nicely," said Piney. "Bi, you sit in the middle there, and I'll take the oars. She'll carry us first-rate."

So she did; but Roxy and Susie had almost all the talking to themselves, although both Mary and Mr. Sadler joined in the singing. The lake was very beautiful in the clear still moonlight; and they all said so, one after another. Then Roxy called to her grown-up cousin, —

"O cousin Mary! why don't you take Mr. Sadler

out some evening? Piney says it's a great deal nicer when there isn't such a crowd."

"Piney knows a good deal," said Mr. Sadler. "I found that out to-day."

"Did you?" said Roxy. "Well, 'most everybody does. He knows all about moonshine. Do you?"

Mr. Sadler laughed heartily, and Mary not quite so heartily; but Roxy got no other answer.

Piney had all the hard work, but he seemed to enjoy himself as much as anybody. They remained out on the water for about an hour and a half; and, when they got back to the landing, there were aunt Sarah and aunt Keziah waiting for Susie and Roxy. On the whole, it had been a somewhat fatiguing day; and if anybody in the house was awake an hour later than that, it is likely nobody else was aware of it.

The next day was Saturday; and the exhibition was to be held in the afternoon, because, if it were held in the evening, a good many of the country people, living at long distances from the village, would not be able to attend it.

During the morning Mr. Sadler strolled all over the farm with uncle Liph, and they probably had any amount of business affairs to talk of.

The rest of the household got along as best they could; but just before noon Piney saw Kyle Wilbur coming up the road from the village, and went out to meet him.

"What on earth took you over before dinner?" he asked.

"Oh!" said Kyle, on whose face there was a sort of gloomy expression, "just you wait and see. I've got a new idee."

"A new idea? What's that?"

"I'll show you before the day's over. Guess all the folks won't laugh at me the way they did yesterday."

"Why, no: there won't any of 'em laugh at your piece. It's kind o' sober."

"Well, it is, now. I guess they'll get all the burning deck they want, too. You see'f they don't."

Piney was unable to get out of him any particulars at all concerning his new idea, and Kyle went on to his own house.

"He's a queer stick," said Piney to Bi, "and his feathers were awfully ruffled at being laughed at. He's just the kind of boy to go and do something nobody ever heard of before. Guess I won't, though. I'll leave my bow at home."

"Your bow?"

Piney explained to him all about the bow and arrows, and how he had intended making use of them when he delivered his "piece."

"No," said Bi. "You're right about that. I wouldn't wear 'em if I were you,—not unless you

could get up a complete Indian rig. We could get one, though, if we were at our house."

"Are there any there?"

"Father's got some, and so has grandfather, among their curiosities, — splendid ones. Rig you up for an Indian chief, bow and arrows, and tomahawk and club and spear, feathers and all."

"Wouldn't that be gay now! But it wouldn't do to set up for much of an Indian, in just my Sunday clothes, and a bow and arrows."

"And no paint. I guess not. It's a pity, though, that Roxy can't wear the things she practised in. Just think of it! How she would bring down the house!"

"Wouldn't she, though! And with Chub standing on the trail behind her."

They both agreed that they were not likely to get any thing quite so funny at the academy exhibition that day, but they did not know what was working in the troubled mind of Kyle Wilbur. Nobody else did, for he had concealed his purposes from even Bill Young.

More than half of the upper story of the academy building was thrown into one large room, with a raised platform at the western side of it, and with seats all around, like those in a meeting-house. There was a small gallery too; but that was always occupied by a brass-band upon such great occasions

as exhibition-day, and during Fourth-of-July orations. The young gentlemen and young ladies who were to recite always came upon the stage through a door at the side from a stairway which led to a room below. On the stage, at the side opposite that door, stood a piano; and there were plenty of arm-chairs for the principal and the other teachers, and for some of the trustees; and in the middle of the platform was a wide open space for the speakers to have room to move about in.

The hall was filled at an early hour, and it was quite crowded by the time the recitations began. All sorts of people were there, and Bi Hunter said to Mr. Sadler that he "wouldn't have missed seeing that crowd for a good deal."

Piney was to be one of the first solitary "speakers," just after a long dialogue between some young ladies; and aunt Keziah declared that it seemed to her as if that dialogue would never come to an end. It did, however; and all the young ladies marched off, and Piney came marching in.

"Mercy sakes alive!" exclaimed aunt Keziah, in a whisper to Mary.

"Why, what is it?"

"Don't you see? Piney's pale."

"Why, so he is! Poor fellow!"

It was only for a very short moment that his color failed him; and the whole of it came again as he

went ahead, and found himself remembering his poetry perfectly. He recited fairly well too; and Bill Young whispered to Kyle Wilbur, —

“You can’t beat that.”

“Won’t I, though?” said Kyle. “Well, now, you just wait and see.”

There was a vague rumor going the rounds among the boys, that Kyle Wilbur meant to try on something uncommon; but his turn was not to come for a good while yet. There was piano-music, and music by the band, and singing and dialogues, and other boys; and then the time arrived for Roxy to say “The breaking waves.”

Cousin Mary had gone all the way around with her, as far as the door that opened upon the stage; although Roxy said she knew the way well enough, and was not one bit afraid to go alone. Then Mary stood at the door, with it just a little open, to see how Roxy got along.

She began nicely, after she had made her bow to the teachers, and another to the audience. There was only a slight tremor in her clear childish voice; and everybody was delighted, especially her mother and her aunts and her uncle and her grandfather. Stanza followed stanza, just as if she had been at home, until she was more than half-way through. Then the first line of the next stanza seemed to get away from her somehow, and she hesitated.

"What sought they thus afar," whispered cousin Mary through the crack of the side-door.

"That's it. I remember now," exclaimed Roxy triumphantly; and she went right on to the end of it, amid a perfect storm of applause.

Now, at last, came Kyle Wilbur's opportunity to distinguish himself; and all the boys nudged each other with their elbows, and stopped eating peanuts.

"Something's coming now," said Piney to Bi, as he crowded down into the seat beside him.

So there was. Kyle Wilbur was coming, and he was bringing something with him. It had cost him half the money he had saved up for his Fourth-of-July fireworks; and he stopped behind the stage-door, after his name was called, long enough to scratch a match on the stairs, and get his new idea well a-going. Then he marched steadily forward; and in each hand he carried one of the things the fireworks-men call "flower-pots," of the largest size he had been able to find. Each of those flower-pots was beginning to fizz a little on top; but Kyle gravely set them down upon the floor, right and left of him, at about arm's-length, and plunged immediately into the recital of "The boy stood on the burning deck."

Before he was well into the third stanza, his fireworks began to throw out their showers of fire and

stars, with some smoke that smelled very badly ; and the entire audience was shouting and stamping enthusiastically. The boys fairly yelled with delight ; but Kyle went desperately on, in spite of the astonished looks of the principal and teachers behind him, and on the other side of the stage. Just before he reached the end, one of his flower-pots came to the loud “bang” they all make at the last ; and the second exploded just as he was saying, —

“There came a burst of thunder sound :

The boy — oh ! where was he ?”

Nothing could have worked itself better than that, and the academy principal hardly knew what to do about it until after Kyle made his bow. Then, just when he should have walked off, he exclaimed, —

“There, Piney Hunter ! isn’t that better than birch-bark ?”

Of course there was more stamping and cheering ; and, by the time it had subsided, Kyle Wilbur was outside of the academy building. He was quite likely to remain outside for a while, if any opinion about that could be formed from the looks of his teachers ; but Mr. Sadler whispered to Piney, —

“He’s a friend of yours.”

“Next farm to ours,” said Piney.

“Get him to come over, then. I want to see more of that boy. He’s an original.”

Piney knew that already, and so did a great many others; for aunt Keziah was just then remarking to aunt Sarah, —

“Oh! it’s just like Kyle Wilbur.”

The rest of the afternoon’s performances seemed a little tame after the “burning deck,” but it all came to an end. When it was over, and they were praising Roxy for her recitation, she gravely responded, —

“Oh, my! If I could only have had the green-silk dress on, and the bonnet!”

Nothing short of more fireworks, probably, would have created quite such a sensation, if she could have had her wish.

CHAPTER XX.

PREPARING FOR A VOYAGE.

THERE was not a more thoroughly popular boy, among the boys, that Saturday till bedtime, in or about Parable Centre, than Kyle Wilbur.

For some reason or other, however, he did not see fit to stay in the village, and enjoy the distinction he had won. He preferred to go home, and then over to Piney Hunter's house, to see him and Bi.

"Kyle," said Piney, as he stood and leaned against the fence near the gate, "I've got an idea in my head."

"Is it a new idea, or is it just one of your old ones?"

"It's brand-new, and it's as good as your fireworks."

"Well, what's it about?"

"You wouldn't guess it in a week. You know our old scow."

"Nothing new 'bout her."

"Well, we're going up through the lakes next Monday if the weather's good; and it'd be an awful long row."

"Kind o' long, that's a fact," said Kyle; "but we could do it."

"Well, yes, I guess we could; but if we had a mast and sail, now" —

"Hurrah!" shouted Bi. "That'd be just the thing. She'd bear it. I've sailed in a yacht: I've seen all sorts of boats."

"That's a good deal more'n I ever did," said Piney. "Do you s'pose you can show us how?"

"Of course I can. We'll just rig a sail on that scow. You'll want a keel on her first."

"I know. That's a strip of board stuck all along the middle."

"We can fix it. When do you mean to go to work?"

"There's plenty of wood and tools around. Kyle's a born carpenter too."

"So are you, Piney," said Kyle; "but how about the mast and sail?"

"That's easy enough. I've got a piece of a straight spruce sapling, that'll make a good mast. It's more'n ten feet high. We can bore an auger-hole in the middle seat."

"No, you don't," said Bi. "The hole's to be in the seat next the front end, if there's any front end

to a scow like that. I'll show you how to step it; that is, how to fit it in."

"That isn't all," began Piney.

"No: there'll have to be a boom and a yard, to fit the sail on."

"Yes, Piney," said Kyle. "What'll you do about your sail?"

"I've got an old sheet that'll do. We can cut it out, and have it hemmed. There's any quantity of old ropes around the house."

"We can put in some stones for ballast," said Bi. "Hurrah! We'll make her go. I say, boys, let's go about it now."

The exhibition and pretty nearly every thing else were forgotten in half a minute, and the three boys were down by the lake-shore. The boat was hauled out upon the grass, and turned bottom upwards, the first thing. Then perhaps, if aunt Keziah had been there with them, she might have remarked, "Just like Piney;" for the other boys found that he had been thinking over that undertaking for a good while.

He had almost every thing all ready for it. Their worst job was with the keel; for he had made it too wide, as Bi explained to him, and it had to be cut narrower. The rest of the work seemed like nothing at all. The auger-hole was bored in the right place; and right under it a thick piece of

wood, with another hole in it, was nailed upon the bottom, for the mast to stand in.

"Won't we need a bowsprit?" asked Kyle. "All the other ships have 'em."

"No," replied Bi. "We're going to make a cat-boat out of this. It'll only carry one sail."

It was a good thing to have one old sailor among them.

"Bi," said Piney, "the rudder's been puzzling me. How on earth can we manage about that?"

"We'll put in a couple of thole-pins, right in the middle of the stern. Then we can steer her with a paddle: it's just as good."

"I see. That'll do. Now let's shove her into the water."

Nobody would have guessed that the old scow had become a ship, and had a keel, only to look at her. She sat upon the water just as squarely and quietly as usual. When they set up the mast, however, she began to look more as if something had happened to her; and just then the bell rang for supper.

"I'll have to go for my cows after that," said Kyle; "but I'll be over here bright and early Monday morning. Wish to-morrow wasn't Sunday."

"Can't help it," said Piney. "We'll have the other things all ready. We can fix up the sail this evening. Mother'll hem it for me."

There was a good deal to talk about at the supper-table ; but Piney's mother had cousin Mary and even aunt Keziah to help her, afterwards, upon that sail. It was cut and fitted elegantly, and Bi remarked of it, —

“There! That'll take the wind.”

“I'm half afraid they'll get upset,” said Piney's mother.

“Of course they will,” said aunt Keziah quietly. “I'll never feel real safe about them till after they've been tipped over two or three times.”

“Why, they might get drowned!” exclaimed cousin Mary.

“No, they won't,” said aunt Keziah decidedly. “I ain't afraid of that. Besides, they won't even catch cold at this time o' year.”

Mr. Sadler seemed to take a great deal of interest in the idea of transforming the scow into a sailboat. He had even insisted on holding one side of the sail for Mary while she was cutting it into shape.

Saturday evening was all used up before anybody knew how fast it was going ; and the next day was Sunday, and the whole scow business had to be put away. The family went to meeting just as usual. The only mistake made there was by Mr. Sadler, and Roxy told him of it. He walked into the pew with Mary Hunter, and sat down by her, right

between her and her mother; and Roxy whispered to him, so that she was heard very distinctly, —

“That isn’t your place, Mr. Sadler.”

Mary looked straight at the minister; and Mr. Sadler sat quite still, and said nothing.

“Aunt Keziah meant he should sit in this pew with you and me,” said Roxy to Susie. “But it’ll do just as well: she’s got a hymn-book.”

All the rest of the day went even more quietly than usual. It was a dreadfully still day; and even aunt Keziah must have felt it, for, just after supper, she said to Mary Hunter, —

“Mary, if I was you, I’d take Mr. Sadler out for a walk. It’s real nice all along the lake, — only the path’s kind o’ narrow in some places.”

“It isn’t wide enough for two, eh?” said Mr. Sadler. “I suppose it was made for one at a time.”

“Yes,” said Roxy; “and I hate a mean little narrow path. I’d rather go along with somebody.”

“I agree with Roxy entirely,” remarked uncle Liph; but Mary Hunter had gone for her hat the moment aunt Keziah spoke about the walk.

“She’s real obliging, isn’t she, Susie?” said Roxy.

As soon as Mary and Mr. Sadler were out of the house, aunt Keziah took off her spectacles, and remarked, —

"Now, I think he's a real nice stiddy kind of a fellow. He isn't any too old yet, neither; but then, he isn't the kind that girls seem to take to nowadays. You was a good deal like him, Liph Hunter, as I remember you; and Sarah showed her good sense" —

"Now, Keziah!" exclaimed aunt Sarah. "Do you mean to say that all the good sense was on one side?"

"I can't say it was. No; but then Mr. Sadler does seem to me just as if he'd been brought up in the country. There isn't any thing citified about him."

That was high praise from her; but uncle Liph replied, —

"So he was. That's so. But he's a city man now, all over."

It occurred to Roxy, at that moment, that, however pleasant the lakeside-path might be that Sunday evening in June, it was likely to be dusky; and she suddenly exclaimed, —

"Mother, I'd ought to have gone with 'em. What if they couldn't find their way?"

"Oh! I guess they can. Why, Roxy, they are both of them grown up."

"Yes, but they grew up in the city: I didn't."

"They won't get lost, I guess," said aunt Keziah.

"He knows enough not to walk into the lake."

"I do hope he'll let the boat alone," said Roxy. "The oars are 'way up on the bank."

"So they are," said Piney; "but they won't go a-boating Sunday evening. — Bi, don't you kind o' wish it was to-morrow morning?"

Bi rubbed his eyes a little, as he replied, "Well, no. I believe I'd rather take a good sleep first. It's a sleepy sort of day."

It had been hard enough to keep from "talking boat" anyhow, and the two boys retired to their own room somewhat earlier than usual. Therefore only the older people were left to sit up for the return of Mr. Sadler and Mary; and, when these did come back, it was through the front door, and into the parlor. There was nobody there then but uncle Liph and aunt Sarah; for grandfather Hunter and Piney's mother had gone to bed, and aunt Keziah was out in the milk-room.

"Did you find the path too narrow for you?" asked uncle Liph, as they walked slowly in, and were coming across the room.

"No," said Mr. Sadler. "We have made up our minds that it will be wide enough for two."

Then aunt Sarah suddenly sprang up and took Mary in her arms, and hugged her; and uncle Liph shook hands with Mr. Sadler very heartily.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE VOYAGE BEGINS.

WHEN Piney and Bi came in to their breakfast on Monday morning, after the busiest kind of a time down by the lake, they were just in time to hear Roxy say to Mr. Sadler, —

“If they hadn’t put me and Susie to bed when they did last night, I was coming out to look for you and Mary.”

“Why didn’t you come?” began Mr. Sadler; but just then aunt Keziah asked, a little sharply, —

“Piney, is your boat ready to sail?”

“Oh, the boat!” exclaimed Roxy.

“She’s all ready,” said Piney. “Kyle and Bi and I’ve been rigging away at her these two hours.”

“We’ve put in some flat stones for ballast,” said Bi. “She’ll carry that sail easy enough.”

“It’ll be a fine day,” remarked Mr. Sadler. “I’m half sorry I cannot make the trial trip with you.”

“Couldn’t you go?” asked Mary, very demurely. “I am quite sure you would enjoy it.”

"Well, no," he said, with a slow and doubtful shake of his head. "I must stay and talk over some business matters with your father. I can't go."

"I can go," said Roxy. "Susie can take care of Chub and cousin Mary."

Piney and Bi could hardly muster patience to eat their breakfast; and, after that, they came within an ace of going off without the basket of luncheon which aunt Keziah had prepared for them.

"You'll be hungry enough by noon," she said. "Only be sure you bring back that basket."

"We will," said Piney. "Good-by, mother. Kyle's waiting for us."

They were off quickly enough then; and, just after they left the house, Piney said to Bi, —

"Wonder what can have happened to cousin Mary. Her eyes look for all the world as if she had been crying."

"No, I guess not. She doesn't cry very easy. Must have got something into 'em, and rubbed 'em. There's Kyle. I hope he's dug a pile of bait. Is the fishing any better in the upper lake than it is lower down?"

"It's better'n it is here, anyhow. Now for the sail. I just do hope it'll work."

"Don't you be afraid about that. It can't help but work."

The mast was already in its place, and the boom and the bit of a yard were quickly fitted to theirs. They stowed away the luncheon-basket and the bait; Bi took the steering-paddle; Piney shoved the boat from the landing; and then, as the sail was lifted, and the breeze caught and filled it, they heard a sound of cheering from the house.

The whole family were out, waving their hands and their handkerchiefs; and Susie and Roxy were running across the lawn towards the water so fast that they had no breath to even shout. The launching had been accomplished more quickly than anybody had expected, but there was interest enough felt about it evidently.

The old scow promised to make a very fair sort of "cat-boat," and slipped along quite fast; but Bi remarked, —

"The sail's bigger for her than I thought it'd be. She's too narrow to carry it in a strong wind, unless it were dead astern of her."

The other boys hardly understood him; but they took it for granted that he understood himself, and that answered as well just then.

"Hurrah!" shouted Piney. "No more hard pulling for us."

"Not if the wind's right, and if there's enough of it," said Bi.

"You can't be sure," said Kyle. "Sometimes

there isn't any wind to speak of at this time o' year. There's enough now."

"Piney," said Bi, "if you'll steer, I'll mind the sail. Let's head her for the river and the upper lakes, and not stop to fish anywhere down here."

"We won't, — not a minute."

The boys were nicely off, and the farmhouse was clear of them for the day; but there were some other people in it yet. That morning seemed somehow to be the very nicest for Roxy and Susie that they had had since the city people arrived. Not only was the weather out of doors all that could be asked for, but the weather in doors was good, and every thing seemed to be arranged to suit the two girls. Aunt Keziah had taken an uncommon notion to keep Chub with her somewhere all the time. Uncle Liph and grandfather Hunter were planning a drive with aunt Sarah and Roxy's mother. Mary Hunter and Mr. Sadler were playing chess in the front parlor all by themselves. In short, the girls seemed to be left altogether to their own devices, and what more than that could they have asked for?

It seemed exactly so to them, and they did not ask for any thing. They just took their dolls, put on their wide-brimmed shade-hats, and marched out through the front gate, and up the north road.

"The farther north you go," said Roxy, "the cooler it is."

"It isn't north enough to be too cold right here," said Susie.

"No," replied Roxy; "and Piney says it's all because we haven't any north pole."

"No pole? What did he mean?"

"Don't you know? Well, when he comes home, you can ask him. O Susie! There's a darning-needle lit on your sunbonnet."

"A darning-needle? Lit on my bonnet? What is it, Roxy?"

Susie's voice sounded a little scared; and Roxy was watching, with a look which plainly expressed some dread of it, the great brilliant dragon-fly which had paused upon her cousin's hat.

"Susie," she said, "take it off, and look at him. There he goes. Don't you see him? That's his needle. Isn't he beautiful?"

Susie had snatched off her hat, and she now gazed after the dragon-fly with open mouth and eyes.

"Roxy, let's go home."

"What for?"

"Why, I don't like those flies."

"It isn't a fly at all: it's a darning-needle."

"Is it? Is it a kind of bird?"

"Bird? Now, Susie! It isn't a bird neither. But they don't hurt anybody. They don't even sting. They only scare you a little."

Susie looked at her hat very carefully all over; but

it was unharmed, and she decided not to go back to the house.

"Do you ever have any humming-birds around here?" she asked.

"Oh! sometimes we do. They're funny, ain't they? A king bumblebee is 'most as big as a humming-bird."

"What's a king bumblebee?"

"I'll show you. They 'light on thistles. We'll find some."

There were plenty of thistles at the roadside, here and there, with large red flowers; and Roxy and Susie stood by a patch of them for some minutes, watching the bees and other winged people that came to make calls there.

"That's a honey-bee," said Roxy.

"Is it?" asked Susie. "How can you tell? I don't see any honey about him. He isn't big either."

"He's a honey-bee," persisted Roxy. "Piney told me all about them. There now, there's a bumblebee. He's big enough."

"Oh, so he is! I'm afraid of him. Do you s'pose he'd sting us?"

"Not if you let him alone. Maybe he knows you're a cousin of mine."

Susie laughed merrily at that idea; but Roxy looked serious about it, and Susie said, —

"Do you suppose, now, that that bee knows you?"

"Piney says that all the bees know their neighbors. They never sting him, — not any of the bees, only the wasps and hornets."

"Show me a wasp."

"There's one, now, on that tall thistle. I'd as lief be bunted by a sheep as have him sting me. And there's a hornet. Look how long and narrow and blue he is. Piney says they're all sting."

"Don't they ever make honey?"

"I guess they don't. Nobody'd eat hornet's honey. Would you?"

"Oh! I like honey. Look there, Roxy. What an awful big bee!"

"That's a king bee! A king bee!"

"Why, I thought bees had queens. I never heard of a king bee."

"But that's a king bumblebee. Just hear him hum!"

It was a very loud hum indeed, as the splendid-looking insect arose from the flower he was on; but Susie was getting tired of bees and thistles.

"Let's go on, Roxy, and see if we can't see some birds."

"Of course we can. There's lots and lots of birds everywhere. There, Susie, that's a yellow-bird. See, there's a flock of 'em. And just see the chipping-birds."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Susie. "And there's a yellow-bird with black wings."

"And some blackbirds on the fence. Look at 'em."

In fact, as they strolled along, Roxy was able to point out to her city cousin quite a variety of birds and insects. A crow, a robin, a cat-bird, a meadow-lark, a bobolink, a blue-jay, were, one after another, made the subjects of her remarks; and some of these were "remarkable," if correct.

Neither of them had any clear idea how far they had walked, for their small heads had been too full of other matters. They had looked at things, and talked about them, until they were beginning to feel a little tired. That was not so bad, but they were also about to receive a bit of a scare. Susie suddenly turned her head in the direction in which they had come, exclaiming, —

"What's that noise, Roxy?"

"That? Why, don't you know what that is? It's cows."

"But how loud it is!"

"So it is," said Roxy, with more anxiety in her face and voice. "Oh, dear me! I'm afraid it's going to be a drove of cattle."

"Cattle? What shall we do? Won't they run over us?"

"Of course they will. They always do. Cattle are awful."

"O mother, mother!" exclaimed poor Susie.
"I wish I was home."

"Come now, Susie, don't cry," said Roxy, putting her brave little arms about her frightened cousin.
"It's ever so much better just to climb the fence."

"Will that save us from 'em?"

"Course it will. It's all anybody ever does when there are cows a-coming. I've seen aunt Keziah climb a taller fence than this is. Let's do it before they get here."

It was a nice rail-fence, easy to climb, even for such little girls as those two were; but they were not on the other side of it any too soon. The drove of cattle was a large one, and some of the great lumbering oxen in front acted as if they were angry. The whole width of the road was crowded by the lowing, rushing, trampling mass of horned creatures. If the children had been anywhere between the fences of that road, they would surely have been trodden down. As it was, they were entirely safe behind the rails they were peering between; but it made them frightened, even then, to hear so much noise, and see so many pairs of dangerous-looking horns moving through the clouds of dust.

"I'll remember it as long as I live," almost sobbed Susie.

"Guess you'd better," replied Roxy very posi-

tively. "If you should ever forget to climb the fence, it would be awful."

"I mean, I'll remember the oxen."

"No, you won't. They're all too much alike. But I know our cows, every one of them: they've got names."

Behind that drove of cattle there were some men on horseback, and one or two on foot; and another man, coming from the opposite direction in a lumber-wagon, stopped right in front of where the girls were. He had driven through the drove slowly, and now he seemed to be angry.

"There ort to be a law ag'in it," he shouted to the men on horseback. "Drivin' a drove like that on such a travelled road as this, at this time o' day! Somebody might be killed."

"Got any critters to sell?" returned one of the horsemen dryly. "Beef's a-goin' down."

"S'pose, now, somebody's children — I declare, if there ain't two little gals now! They might have been just trampled."

"Why, Susie, it's Deacon Simmons!" exclaimed Roxy at that moment; and then she shouted, at the top of her voice, —

"Deacon Simmons! Deacon Simmons! Here are Susie and me."

"Is that you, Roxy? Well, if you ain't a pilgrum to-day, wuss'n you was a-Saturday! How'd ye ever come to git so fur from home?"

"We walked," said Roxy.

"You did, did ye? Why, it's a good four mile. Well, you'll just git in here, and ride with me, you will. You're goin' right home, you are. Did that there drove scare ye?"

"It scared Susie, but we remembered to climb the fence," said Roxy.

"It's well ye did. — I say, you, mister! If I go to the Legislatur' next fall, I'll git a law passed ag'in such things. And if I don't go, I'll help send some other man that will."

"I'll give ye a fair price for your critters, if you've any to sell," was all the answer he received, and the drovers pushed along in the dust behind the cattle. Roxy and Susie were clambering over the fence into the road again now; and the good deacon stopped some remarks he began to send after the drovers, to get down and help the girls into his wagon.

"What could have got into Keziah Merrill," he said, "to let two such bits of things ramble off alone? If my wife was here, now, she'd give her a piece of her mind. I don't know but what I will, myself, when I git there."

For all his indignation, however, Deacon Simmons chatted merrily with Roxy and Susie all the way to their own gate.

There stood aunt Keziah and Roxy's mother,

and cousin Mary, looking up; and Mary exclaimed, —

“It’s they, sure enough. Dear me! I sent Mr. Sadler the wrong way.”

“It’s Deacon Simmons,” said aunt Keziah. “I wonder where they were when he picked them up. He’s one of the best of men.”

“I’m so glad he found them!” exclaimed Roxy’s mother. “I was really alarmed when I saw those cattle go by.”

CHAPTER XXII.

A GRAND TIME.

SOMEBODY or other, a great while ago, said that the funniest thing about a river was, that its head and its mouth were so far apart. There is some truth in it; but for all that, every river there is seems to know just where to go. You never heard of one trying to climb over a hill. Even such a little bit of a river as the Ti-ough-ne-au-ga, that ran through those little lakes and on down the valley, was wise enough to pick out the easiest course to run in. For that reason the banks of it were quite low, except in one or two places where it had made or found a channel through ridges of high ground. Here, too, it was narrower; and there were ledges of rocks on one side or the other, but these helped make the scenery beautiful, and did no manner of harm.

The three boys thought they had never seen any thing finer in all their lives. Kyle Wilbur and Piney Hunter had seen it before, to be sure, and

had visited all of it in that very boat. But then, the old scow had not had a mast and sail in her until that morning; and that made a great difference in the way every thing looked to them.

They narrowly watched Bi in his management of the sail, and their respect for the boy from the city was very much increased by the things they saw him do. The curiosity was, that while the wind blew steadily from the south-west all the while, and the river made any number of crooks and turns, Bi kept the boat in motion in the right direction by changing the position of the sail. Now it was right over the boat for a minute or so, and then it would swing out a little on one side or the other, and then he would let it away out at right angles or even farther.

"We couldn't do much with this boat in a head wind," he said. "If this wind holds on all day, we'll have plenty of short tacking to do on our way back."

"What's tacking?" asked Kyle.

"Oh! you just sail back and forth, and gain a little every time. I'll show you. Besides, we can row home if we've got to."

"We won't if we can help it," said Piney. "Anyhow, let's sail right on to the upper lake. It's the biggest."

It was not long before they came out grandly into

the middle lake. It was about as long as the one by the farmhouse, but was somewhat wider.

As the scow moved swiftly on from the narrow place where the river went out of the lake, Bi noticed that both his friends were busy with their fishing-tackle.

"Oh, boys!" he exclaimed, "let's sail. Don't stop to catch any fish."

"No," said Piney, "we won't stop. Only I've always thought how I could troll for pickerel if I only had a sailboat. I've got the neatest kind of a spoon-hook; and here's one for you, all ready rigged."

"A spoon-hook!" shouted Bi. "That's splendid! Why, Piney, I've trolled for bluefish on Long Island Sound."

"I brought my spoons along too," said Kyle, "but I didn't say nothing to nobody about it. I meant to kind o' catch Piney."

"You didn't get ahead of me this time, Kyle.— Bi, is a bluefish any thing like a pickerel?"

"Not much to look at him, but he'll strike at a hook just about the same. They're pretty large fish sometimes."

"Bigger than pickerel?"

"Larger'n any kind of fish you ever catch here."

"Well, yes, of course," said Kyle. "It's no credit to them. They've all the ocean to grow in."

"Yes," said Piney: "they can swim around anywhere, and not graze themselves against the shore."

"Hurrah, now!" shouted Bi: "I'll set the boat steady, right up the lake; and we'll all try our hands."

The "spoon-hooks" were just what their name indicated. They were of pretty good size, with what was shaped like the bowl of a spoon just above them; and when they were pulled through the water, that bit of shining metal twirled and glittered in a way to make a pickerel imagine he saw the prettiest kind of a "shiner," just ready to be eaten. In the course of about two minutes more, there were three of those deceitful hooks leaping and flashing along over the little waves in the wake of the old scow.

It was magnificent fun. There was no worry about bait. There was no rowing to do; nothing but to lie there in the stern of the scow, and watch for bites, while the light breeze did all their work for them and carried them northward.

Piney Hunter could have sung something, if he could have remembered any song that would not scare fish; and even Kyle Wilbur's sallow face began to look red and earnest.

The first bite came to Bi's hook; and he "struck it," as fishermen say, in a manner that told a story for his bluefishing,—that is, the other boys saw

that he knew how to do it; and again they wondered that a city boy, and a bit of a dandy too, should know so much about some things when he knew so little about others.

"Shouldn't wonder if he might say the same thing about us," thought Piney, "if he had us in the city."

Bi pulled in his pickerel neatly, hand over hand, and landed him securely on the bottom of the boat.

"Not a very big one," he muttered.

"Well, yes," said Piney, "it's fair. Guess it'll weigh pretty nigh a pound. There's more of 'em under that size than there are above it. I wish we could strike some whoppers."

Just at that moment there came a sharp and sudden tug upon his own line, which almost jerked it away from him.

"You've got one!" shouted Bi.

"Not too hard, Piney," said Kyle coolly. "You might pull it out of his mouth."

"Or I might break my hook or my line," replied Piney, his face all one blaze of excitement. "I say, boys, this one's a regular cod-lamper. See him jump!"

"Give him line!" screamed Bi. "That one won't hold him on a dead pull. Give him line!"

"That's so," said Kyle. "That string wasn't made for fish of his size. Hullo! I've got one."

It looked like it for a moment ; but then he was compelled to add, —

“No, I haven’t: he’s off. I wasn’t ’tending to my own business. It’s just my luck.”

“Yes,” said Piney, “that’s about what most folks call luck. It mostly comes to folks when they ain’t minding their own business.”

He was pulling earnestly at his own struggling fish ; but Kyle replied half sulkily, —

“You ’tend yours, or you’ll lose him.”

There was no comfort at all in throwing away a good bite ; but Kyle at once let out his hook again with a manifest purpose of watching it more carefully. It was not easy, however, for him or Bi to keep their eyes away from Piney’s fight with his “cod-lamper.”

“I must bring him in, boys, or it’ll make me sick.”

“Guess it would me,” said Bi. “Why, he’s as big as a bluefish, and he works a good deal harder.”

It took a good while to master that pickerel with that tackle. If Piney had been in too much of a hurry, he surely would have lost his game ; but he stuck to it bravely and patiently, until at last he pulled him alongside of the boat.

“Hold him steady,” said Kyle, “till I give him a lift.”

“Quick now !” shouted Piney.

Kyle was both quick and a little dexterous, and Piney lifted with the line as hard as was safe. In an instant more the pickerel was in the boat, the largest fish either of them had ever seen caught, in either of those lakes, by even old fishermen.

They dropped all other fishing for a moment, to admire and discuss him.

"Hawknose John says all the fish were bigger in the old Indian times," said Piney. "He says they won't grow so large for white men."

"If they were all like that one," began Bi; but Kyle remarked, —

"Guess the Indians didn't have any spoon-hooks."

Bi Hunter lost a capital bite while he was admiring that pickerel, and Kyle Wilbur said to him, —

"There! That makes me feel better. Guess I can catch something now."

So he did, before a great while; but it was not a pickerel, — only a fine, large yellow perch.

"Those fellows don't often strike at a spoon-hook," said Piney; "but they will sometimes, — the larger ones."

"This here's a grandfather perch," said Kyle. "I'd as lief have him as a pickerel any day."

"Now, boys!" exclaimed Bi, "let's tack back 'way across the lake. If this isn't good fun, I don't know what fun is."

Just so; but they sailed across the lake and half

way back again before they caught another fish. Then the biting took a fresh start, and four or five more good fish were pulled in, not to speak of several fine "misses."

"I say," said Piney, "look here. We've been trying this ground about long enough. The upper lake's the best fishing. There don't so many go there."

The river between the middle and upper lakes was a mere strait, only half a mile long, windings and all.

"Not so many farms around this one," said Bi, as they sailed gayly into it. "More woods. Hullo, Piney! Look there. Isn't that an island?"

"Rockiest kind of one," replied Piney. "We'll eat our lunch there. Let's sail all around it first, and troll as we go."

The upper lake may have been a better fishing-ground, and it was true that they pulled in a greater number of finny folk; but they did not get a mate for Piney's pickerel.

"Just to think," said Kyle, "of all the shiners that fellow must have swallowed to bring him up!"

"There's more chance for all the little fish, now he's out of the water," said Piney. "It's twelve o'clock, boys. Don't you begin to feel as if you could eat something?"

Both of them said they did. The island itself

looked wonderfully attractive, too, as they sailed nearer to it, with its tall trees rising among the rocks and down to the water's edge.

"It's just for all the world like going into the wilderness!" exclaimed Bi, as he lowered the sail. They were close in shore, and the old scow's nose grated on the gravelly beach as Kyle responded, —

"Wilderness? That's a big word for an island that isn't more'n an acre and a half, and that nobody'd live on if you'd give it to 'em."

"I don't know about that," said Bi. "If I was rich, and wanted a good place to spend summer in, I don't know but what I'd build a house right here. It wouldn't do for winter, though."

"Why not?" said Piney.

"Why, you'd be frozen in."

"No, you wouldn't, — not much of the time. The lake freezes hard enough to bear a loaded wagon. You could drive sleighs from this island over to the village all winter long. The lake's just the best sleighing there is."

"That's so," said Kyle. "And you can catch any amount of fish through the air-holes."

"I brought some matches," said Bi. "We'll have a fire in less'n no time."

"And we'll cook some of our own fish," said Piney. "Soon as I've put 'em on a string, I'll wash some stones."

“Stones?” asked Bi. “What for?”

“To cook the fish on. It’s the way the Indians did it. Heat your stones good and hot. Use wide flat ones, you know. Beats a broiler all hollow.”

His first care, however, was to string all his fish, except those he meant to cook, — three of the smaller pickerel, — on a stout piece of twine; and then he lowered the whole string into the water, and fastened it to the boat.

“That’ll keep ’em fresh. Now for dinner. Oh, but I’m hungry!”

Kyle and Bi had gathered bark and dead wood, and started their fire by that time; and it was blazing vigorously.

“Now, Bi,” said Kyle, “you tend fire, and I’ll help Piney clean fish. Guess the Indians didn’t clean theirs much.”

“Not much,” remarked Piney. “Sometimes they just daubed ’em with clay, and wrapped ’em in bass-wood leaves, and covered ’em up in the hot ashes, and let ’em roast. I read about it.”

It was well they were so hungry, for aunt Keziah had put up a liberal luncheon for them. Still, not any thing in the basket tasted half so well as did those fish.

“Best picnic I ever heard of!” exclaimed Bi. “If I lived out here, I’d come over to this island once a week.”

"Yes," growled Kyle; "and then everybody else'd come, and pretty soon there wouldn't be a fish left in the lake. They're gettin' kind o' scurse now."

Kyle was a little inclined to look at the shady side of things, but it may be that he was more than half right. After dinner, however, the boys spent nearly an hour in rambling over the island, and climbing among the rocks; and Bi pointed out at least half a dozen good spots to build a house on.

"Yes," said Kyle; "and if you wanted to, you could build a stone house. All your stone'd be right here handy."

"So would your timber," said Piney, "if you wanted a log house."

Bi said he would wait a while before he began to build, and then they agreed that it was about time to be moving.

"Let's go for some more fish," said Piney; "and then we'd better make tracks for home."

"Guess it'll be making tacks too," remarked Bi; but the scow was right there, all ready, and the heavy string of fish was lifted out of the water and into the boat.

"Boys," said Bi, as he raised the sail, "shove her off; but I just hate to have to come away from that island."

"So do I!" The other two said it in the same breath; but the sail filled, and away they went.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHAT BECAME OF THE LUNCH-BASKET.

DEACON SIMMONS did indeed "give aunt Keziah Merrill a piece of his mind" about letting that pair of children wander away so far all by themselves. She had less, too, to say in her own defence than most people would have expected from her. She insisted, however, that the deacon should stay to dinner.

"It's almost ready," she said; "and Mr. Sadler won't be gone long."

"Where's he gone?" asked the deacon.

"He? Oh! he's hunting after Susie and Roxy."

"Well, then, yes. If he keeps on a-huntin' till he finds 'em, I might as well git into my waggin and drive on."

"No, you won't," said aunt Keziah very decidedly. "I won't hear to it."

"But, Miss Merrill," said the deacon, "I'm an old man; and if he goes on after them little gals, I mayn't be livin' when he lights onto 'em."

"Now, deacon!"

"He's coming!" exclaimed cousin Mary, from behind the curtains of the parlor window. "Right up the road. I do wish he wouldn't walk so fast this broiling hot day."

"Found 'em, has he?" asked the deacon.

"No, sir," said Roxy. "Mr. Sadler didn't find either of us, 'cause we weren't there."

"Why, no," said Susie, "of course he didn't. Here we are."

"I'm right down glad of that too," said Deacon Simmons. "And that's Mr. Sadler a-comin'? I saw him in meetin' last Sunday. 'Pears to be a promisin' young man. Just a leetle stiff and stuck up. Don't see why he should be, nuther, for he ain't over and above good-lookin'."

Aunt Sarah and Piney's mother were both smiling queerly at Mary, just then, for some reason; but she did not say a word in reply to the deacon. She walked half-way out to the gate, though, as Mr. Sadler came up the road; and she called out to him, —

"They have come home, Mr. Sadler. They are both quite safe."

"The little scamps!" he exclaimed. "I've been racing everywhere."

"Mr. Simmons found them on the road, at quite a distance from the house, and brought them home. Dinner is waiting for you, George, — Mr. Sadler."

“So am I, George,” said old Deacon Simmons, with an odd twist of his great, broad, stooping shoulders. “Young men nowadays seem mostly to hunt in the wrong direction.”

Roxy and Susie had kept still about their wonderful adventures about as long as they could. Now that they found they were not scolded very severely, all the birds and insects and flowers required to be told of eagerly. When, however, they came to speak of the trampling drove of angry cattle, and of how they climbed over the fence to get out of the way, aunt Sarah caught Susie right up in her arms, and hugged her, and Roxy’s mother suddenly exclaimed, —

“O Roxy, darling! Come here!”

Then, while she was hugging Roxy, her eyes were shut hard for a moment, and so were aunt Keziah’s, and aunt Sarah’s.

“That’s right,” said old Deacon Simmons. “’Pears to me sometimes, when I think of it, the Lord knows just when to put a fence ag’in the need of one. Only some on ’em don’t get to be staked and ridered the way they’d ought to be.”

At the dinner-table, all of the ladies except cousin Mary seemed determined to help Deacon Simmons over again before his plate was half empty; but the talking would have dragged a little if it had not been for Roxy and Susie.

"I wonder how the boys are getting along," said aunt Keziah at last.

"They're doing well enough," remarked Mr. Sadler placidly. "I don't believe they are at all in a hurry to get home."

A good many things were said about the young sailors; and all agreed quite heartily in the hope expressed by Deacon Simmons, that "they wouldn't get themselves drowned before they finished their v'y'ge."

At the very hour when their friends at the farmhouse were talking about them, Piney and Bi and Kyle were floating away from the island. There was just wind enough at first to fill the sail fairly; but the old scow went along more and more slowly, and before they had gone any great distance the water was as still as a washtub, and the sail hung limp and idle.

"What a dead calm!" said Bi.

"Never mind," said Piney. "We can't troll, but we've plenty of bait. We can just anchor and fish."

"'Tisn't as good fun as trolling," remarked Kyle; "but there's crowds of pumpkin-seeds 'most anywhere about here."

So it proved, as soon as they put out their lines; and as fast as fish were caught, Piney insisted on stringing them. Now, too, that they were at anchor,

he hung the strings of fish over the side of the boat to keep them fresh.

"There's sun enough to dry 'em all up if we don't," he said. "Uncle Liph can't eat fish if they ain't just about so."

Something like an hour went by; and the lake, and the woods on the shore, and all the rocks and trees on the island, made up a picture of perfect peace and quiet. It was enough to make the boys feel sleepy, and not one of them thought of taking any notice of the sky.

If they had done so, to be sure, they would not have seen many clouds; but they might possibly have noted at last a sort of misty cloud-bank in the east.

They did not see it at all until Kyle looked up from putting a bullhead on the string, and said, —

"I say, boys, there's some wind a-comin'. We won't have to row home, after all."

"Wind?" exclaimed Bi. "That's so. It'll be here quick too. Let's have up the anchor."

He at once began to pull upon the anchor-rope; and Piney and Kyle, just to be good sailors, and help him, hoisted the sail.

"Hold on!" shouted Bi. "We're not half ready. It looks as if there was going to be a squall."

There had been a ripple on the water away towards the western shore of the lake. It was just

a little rough patch at first ; but it grew and spread and darkened with sudden swiftness, and it came sweeping on towards the boat while Bi was lifting the anchor.

"It's coming !" shouted Kyle, as he gave an extra tug upon the halyards of the sail.

"Here it is !" exclaimed Piney, as the cool breeze blew sharply on his cheek.

"Kyle !" shouted Bi excitedly. "Drop that rope !"

Kyle obeyed, and dropped it instantly ; but a knot on it caught upon one of the seats, and held firmly, just as the sail swelled out with the full force of the fierce gust which followed.

It seemed for a moment as if the mast would surely break ; but it was a tough, well-seasoned piece of spruce, and it bent without snapping. If it had broken then, the boat would not have been upset ; but, as it was, the wind seemed to take a stronger and stronger hold of the sail, and forced it over farther and farther, until one of the large flat stones they had put in for ballast slipped out of its place. That settled the matter, and over went the old scow.

Bi and Kyle went over with it, but Piney was in the water already : as soon as he had seen what was coming, he had sprung right in without one second of hesitation. As he afterwards explained his sudden jump, —

"I didn't care to get myself tangled up with any thing;" but Bi replied emphatically, —

"Yes, that's so; but the moment you were out of that boat, our biggest piece of ballast was gone. It was worse for the boat than having that stone slip."

"I never thought of that."

"Well, no more did I just then."

Probably he did not; for "just then" they were all puffing around in the water, and Bi himself was feeling particularly glad that he knew how to swim.

"I say, boys," he shouted, "shall we strike for the shore, or for the island? The island's nearest. Guess I could swim ashore, though, with one of the paddles to help keep me up."

"No, sir-ee," said Piney. "We'll just right the old scow where she is, and bail her out."

"Can we do that?"

"Course we can," said Kyle, "if the water isn't too rough. We've tipped her over and righted her lots of times."

Bi had not thought of such a feat as that, but he took hold manfully to do his share.

"I see what's the matter," he said, after they had worked in vain for a few minutes. "It's the sail. We must manage to get it down."

"Of course," said Piney. "What a stupid I am, not to have thought of that!"

There was nothing very difficult about it, and before long they had the old boat righted; but she was nearly full, and her sides were only an inch or two above water. Half the waves that came went right over into her; and the prospect did not seem a very bright one, unless the wind should go down.

Nevertheless, the boys worked away with a will; and they were gaining pretty handsomely, when Piney suddenly exclaimed, —

“Look here, Kyle, don’t you see? Bi’s getting tired out. He can’t swim like you and me.”

“What on earth’ll we do?”

“I could hold on a while yet,” began Bi bravely; but his face was a little pale, and Piney interrupted him with, —

“No, you can’t. You go to the stern of the boat, and climb over in. She’ll carry you all alone.”

Bi did so, for he was really beginning to feel exhausted. He was delighted to find that his weight only sank the boat down to about where she had been when they began.

“I’ll bale like sixty now!” he exclaimed. “I can work ten times faster than I could before.”

That was evident; and the effect was so good, that in a few minutes Piney said to him, —

“Try and pull in the anchor, Bi. We’ll help you, — only we mustn’t upset her again.”

It was what Kyle Wilbur described as “mighty

ticklish kind of business ;” but the anchor was safely lifted in, and Bi returned to his toil of bailing. They were all using their hats for dippers ; and, on the whole, they answered the purpose pretty well.

“Bi,” said Piney, “you stick to your bailing, while Kyle and I tow her towards the island.”

“Pity we’ve lost all our fish,” said Kyle mournfully.

“Lost ’em ?” said Piney. “Why, no, we haven’t lost a fin of ’em. But I’d forgotten all about them. We never can tow the boat with those strings of fish dragging alongside.”

“If they haven’t staid hitched to her !” exclaimed Kyle. “So they have. Why, we can h’ist ’em right in.”

“Careful !” said Piney. “Take it easy, or we’ll have the boat over. Bi’s bailing like a good fellow. If it wasn’t for some of the waves washing in, he’d get ahead fast. Now, Kyle !”

Bi helped them lift the fish in ; but his face wore a somewhat mortified expression when he saw Piney strike out towards the shore with the hitching-rope of the boat fastened to his coat-collar, while Kyle Wilbur was pushing with all his might at the stern. He envied them their strength and skill as swimmers, but he tried all the harder to do his full duty with his hat.

The paddles and seats had all been saved, of course, and the fishing-rods. The trolling-lines had

been tied to the thole-pins, and were safe. All that was lost, they thought and said, was the bait-box; until Piney turned over in the water, and exclaimed, —

“The lunch-basket!”

“Bottom of the lake,” replied Kyle.

“That’s too bad,” said Bi.

“Aunt Keziah’ll think so,” said Piney ruefully.

“Basket, napkins, plates, forks, knives, spoons, pepperbox, and pickle-bottle, all drowned.”

“It can’t be helped,” said Kyle. “It was too deep to dive for ’em.”

Altogether too deep; and the basket was left to its fate, while the boys manfully worked their way to the shore.

When they were once there, it was easy to drag the boat half out of the water, upon a sloping beach, and turn her up on one side to drain. It was much easier than doing any more bailing in that hot sunshine. Then she was launched again, with more stones in her for ballast; but the afternoon was pretty well used up when they were ready to start for home. So were the boys; but then the wind was fair and strong and westerly, so that they had no hard work of rowing before them. If it had not been for the basket, the fun of the day would hardly have been diminished at all by such a small matter as a shipwreck, and a swim for dear life, — now it was all over.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PRIZES AND SURPRISES.

LATE that afternoon, and a good while after Deacon Simmons climbed into his wagon and drove away, uncle Liph Hunter came back in the carryall. Of course he brought the mail; but they were all a little surprised to see grandfather also, and both he and uncle Liph seemed to be unusually bright and smiling.

"Guess he doesn't know about us and the cattle," said Roxy to Susie. "They didn't tell him yet."

"Mother'll tell him," said Susie; but just then aunt Sarah was asking him what kept him so long, and aunt Keziah was inquiring whether or not he had had any dinner.

"Plenty," said uncle Liph, — "plenty. I took dinner with your minister and the academy principal, and three or four other great men."

"You did?" asked aunt Sarah. "How did that happen? And what makes you look so happy?"

"Well, yes, I'm happy ; and it's funny too. The fact is, I've some news for the family."

"News?" exclaimed aunt Keziah. "What can it be?"

"I'll tell you. It's great. They've been giving the prizes for the exhibition and to the scholars. The teachers, of course, reported who were the best in all the regular classes ; but they selected a committee of independent gentlemen, in the audience, to decide upon the prizes for the declamation."

"Now, that was only fair," said aunt Keziah approvingly.

"Fair?" said uncle Liph. "So it was. So it was. But who do you think got the prize?"

"Do tell us," said she.

"Well, the report of the committee says, 'First prize for excellence in declamation, Master Kyle Wilbur.'"

"You don't say!" almost shouted aunt Keziah. "I declare ! It was his fireworks did that."

"The teachers said about as much. I don't think they more than half liked it, but they couldn't very well help themselves. Then there was a second prize."

"Who got that?" asked Mary.

"The first prize was a big dictionary, and the second was a fine set of story-books."

"Oh ! who got them?" exclaimed Susie.

"A young lady," said uncle Liph.

"A young lady?"

"Yes, and her name is Roxy Hunter."

Oh, what a shout there was then, from Roxy's mother and aunts, and from cousin Mary! Mr. Sadler picked up Roxy, and tossed her almost to the ceiling.

"Poor Piney!" muttered aunt Keziah. "I do wish he'd won something. But he'll be as glad about Kyle as if he'd won it himself."

"Piney?" said uncle Liph. "Why, he's nothing to complain of. I was proud enough of all they had to say about him. He is marked first in more than half the classes he is in. I brought home five or six nice books for him: they are out in the carriage. Where is he now?"

"Piney and Bi and Kyle are out sailing on the lake yet," said aunt Keziah; "but it's about time they were home. I do hope nothing has happened to 'em. They were going to go clean through to the upper lake."

Another hour went by without any glimpse of the boys, however, and then another hour; and the people at the farmhouse began to feel almost uneasy when they found tea-time drawing near.

"Shall I go and look for them?" asked Mr. Sadler of cousin Mary.

"No, indeed. Didn't you hear what Deacon Simmons said?"

"What was that?"

"Why, that the young men nowadays didn't know which direction to hunt in."

"That's so," remarked Mr. Sadler slowly. "That's the reason none of them ever find anybody. I guess I won't go after the boys."

Just then a tall lady came in through the gate somewhat hurriedly; and aunt Keziah exclaimed, the moment she saw her, —

"If there isn't Kyle's mother! I wonder if she's alarmed about him."

Mrs. Wilbur was a neighbor, and she walked right into the house without any ceremony. She was at once introduced to the visitors from the city, but had been well aware that they would be there. She was tall and thin, and her face was as "peaked" as Kyle's; but she looked as if she might be a woman of strong common-sense.

"Didn't my Kyle go a-boatin' with your Piney?" she soon asked of Piney's mother.

"Yes, — with him and his cousin Bi."

"Well, don't it seem to you as if they'd been gone about long enough? Kyle's got his cows to go for, and there's the pigs to feed. But then, I s'pose it's vacation-time, and boys must be boys."

"Your boy seems to be a very promising one," said uncle Liph. "Have you heard from the village to-day?"

"Not one word of any kind. Do you mean from the academy? Now, I do declare! I knew that caper of his on exhibition-day would get him into a scrape, but I just couldn't help laughin'."

"Everybody laughed," said uncle Liph. "I did, I know. But that wasn't all of it, Mrs. Wilbur. The committee laughed so hard that they awarded Kyle the first prize for declamation."

"You don't say! The first prize to my Kyle? Now, if that isn't somethin' worth while! Why, it'll be the makin' of him. All he's been a-needin', this ever so long, is a little settin'-up."

"He's got it now," said grandfather Hunter. "It's a dictionary, — largest size that's printed."

"Is that so? He'll go through it, then, he will. You see, he and Piney Hunter are neighbors, and they're good friends too; but Piney beats him too bad, most of the time, on books and such things. And now he's gone and won a prize, right over Piney's head. I declare!"

They all sympathized too sincerely with Mrs. Wilbur's pleasure to say any thing just then about Piney's school record, for Kyle had scored no prizes there. Even aunt Keziah shut her lips resolutely; but Roxy marched forward with, —

"Kyle got one prize, Mrs. Wilbur; but I got the other. I didn't forget a word of my piece."

"You got a prize, my dear?" said Mrs. Wilbur.

"I'm glad of it. — But, Mrs. Hunter, Keziah, don't you think those boys ought to be home by this time?"

Mr. Sadler and Mary had walked out on the lawn while the rest were talking; and just at that moment they heard him shout, —

"Here they come! All three of them, — boat and all."

Everybody was up in an instant, and the parlor was left empty.

There were the young fishermen, indeed; and they sailed rapidly in towards the landing-place where their friends were hurrying down to meet them.

They were all there, safe and sound; but they were not by any means the neatly dressed party of young fellows that had sailed so gayly away that morning. They had been well dried by the sun and wind, to be sure, on their way home; but there was no need for them to tell that they had been in the water. And then, such looking hats! It does not improve a hat at all to bail out a boat with it.

The boys were in splendid spirits, however; and, as they came in, they lifted their strings of fish, and swung them proudly around, as much as to say, —

"Do you see that?"

"Piney," sharply demanded aunt Keziah, "have you been upset?"

"No, ma'am," said Piney; "but the boat was, and so were Bi and Kyle. I went in before the old thing had time to go over."

"Piney!" eagerly exclaimed his mother, "were you far from shore?"

"Oh, no! Not more than a quarter of a mile. — Bi swam splendidly, uncle Liph."

"So did Kyle, didn't he?" asked Mrs. Wilbur; and then she added, —

"Kyle, you've won the first prize for declamation!"

"Mother!" exclaimed Kyle, with a sudden flush in his thin face. "Is that so? Why, it can't be possible. Not the way I did it, with fireworks all around the deck."

"Hurrah!" shouted Piney. "That's as good as my big pickerel. Look at that, uncle Liph. Caught him with a spoon-hook."

"And Roxy won the second prize," said aunt Keziah.

Bi and Piney and Kyle joined in another hurrah over that bit of information; but Piney added, at the end of it, —

"Tell you what, mother, I'm glad that only we boys were in the boat when she went over. It was a squall did it."

"Oh, my son!"

"I'll tell you all about it. The boat's safe enough; but we were a little careless, — that's all. But, mother, if Kyle's prize dictionary had been aboard of that scow, it would have gone all the way down with the basket."

"The basket?" exclaimed aunt Keziah. "You don't mean to say you've gone and lost that basket, and all the things in it?"

"Well, no. I didn't mean to say it was lost. We know just about where it is."

"But it's in the lake?"

"Yes, aunt Keziah," said Piney, very mournfully. "That's so. It's in the lake."

"I'm glad you ain't, then. Come out of the boat. You and Bi go and get ready for supper."

"Come, Kyle," said Mrs. Wilbur. "I don't keer one red cent how wet you be. Come along."

"I don't care much, either," said Kyle. "But look at my string of fish."

"Elizabeth," said aunt Keziah to Piney's mother, "just see what a fuss Liph and Sarah are making over Bi; Mary too; and even Susie. Look at 'em! Why, the boy wasn't drowned at all."

"Richard! Piney, my boy!" exclaimed she, instead of answering aunt Keziah.

Piney was holding her hand just then, as they walked along; and he felt it press his own very

hard, but he said nothing. Aunt Keziah was silent for a moment, and coughed a little; and then she remarked, —

“Yes. Well, that’s so. I feel just so about it. They are splendid boys,—all of ’em. But I’m almost afraid they’re likely to be keeless with that there pesky old boat.”

CHAPTER XXV.

INTO THE VACATION.

THE evening, after what Bayard Hunter called "the cruise of the scow," was by all odds the brightest one he had yet had at the farmhouse. He and Piney seemed to be ever so much better acquainted, and to understand each other perfectly; and there were no schoolbooks and lessons in the way now. That meant that Piney was really free to be a boy, and that vacation had actually come.

As for books, indeed, there were the prizes uncle Liph had brought home from the academy; and, besides these, there were half a dozen volumes of Cooper's novels that he himself had purchased in the village for his nephew, as soon as he got away from the trustees.

"Do you know what these are for?" he asked, as Piney thanked him.

"No, sir. I can't guess."

"Well, young man, there was no prize for punct-

ual attendance; and I saw by the record that you had not missed one recitation all last term."

"He never does," said aunt Keziah.

"Well, that's it. That's what these are for," said uncle Liph.

"Oughtn't I to have one, then?" asked Roxy.

"What for?" said grandfather.

"'Cause I'm punct'le," said she.

"O Roxy!" exclaimed her mother.

"Why, mother, ain't I? Ain't I always punct'le when I'm there? When I don't go, why, of course I can't be."

"There's good logic in that," said uncle Liph. "It's all right, Roxy. You were very punctual at the exhibition, and you won a prize."

"Well, but Piney's got his prize already, and mine hasn't come yet."

"Yes, it has," he said, as he pulled a package out from under his chair. "I've kept it back long enough. What do you think of all these?"

Roxy could not have told him, not for any money; and there was a general riot until she and Susie were fairly settled on the floor with those books all to themselves for a while.

Aunt Keziah had by no means heard all she wanted to about the sailing-trip, and the boys had plenty to tell her.

"I do believe I'd almost like to try a voyage in

her myself," said uncle Liph, as they related the performances of the scow.

"Yes," said Mr. Sadler. "So would I, — all but the upset. It isn't everybody can swim out of a scrape as those boys did."

"No," said Roxy; "but you can climb out, if there's any oxens coming."

She had been aching to tell Bi and Piney about her own travels, and it was getting very near time for her and Susie to go to bed.

She and Susie helped one another now, in a way that mixed up the story a little; but Roxy was entirely satisfied when Piney told her he would rather swim through a whole lake-full of cold water and fish than through a drove of angry cattle.

"Unless," she remarked, "you was old Deacon Simmons, and had a wagon to ride in."

"Then I wouldn't care so much," he said. "A good big wagon, with two horses and a dog, is almost as good as a boat."

"And you can't blow it over," added Roxy; "but it's awful dustier than the lake is."

They made a beautiful evening of it. Piney's mother and cousin Mary played on the piano, and sang; and then, after the children were in bed, grandfather said he was tired, and went too; and Bi and Piney got out the chess board. Then Piney's mother came, and sat down by the boys;

and uncle Liph and aunt Sarah went out on the cool piazza. All of a sudden, aunt Keziah looked up, and said to Piney's mother, —

“Elizabeth, what has become of Mary and of Mr. Sadler?”

“They've gone for a walk, Keziah. To-morrow's the last day he can stay here.”

“Is it?” exclaimed Piney. “Then we must show him some fun in the hay-field. The men say there are more bumblebees'-nests than they ever knew before. Some of 'em are built right down in the grass where they're mowing.”

“Don't any of the men ever get stung?” asked Bi.

“Guess they do, — every man of 'em. We'll try for some bumblebees' honey, though. It's the sweetest you ever tasted.”

“We may get stung ourselves a-getting it.”

“Well, yes, we may; but we sha'n't have scythes in our hands. I hardly ever get stung. You needn't, hardly, unless you run away.”

“Run?” asked Bi. “Can't you run away from 'em?”

“I'd like to see a man that can run faster'n a bumblebee can fly. I guess not. The only way is to stand right up to it, and brush 'em off each other.”

“Isn't it kind o' cruel?”

"No," said Piney. "The mowing breaks up most of the nests anyhow, and somebody might as well get the honey."

Whether or not Piney was right about that, he had always considered bees'-nests fair prey, as all country boys do; and he and Bi awoke, next morning, with a sort of preparatory buzzing in their ears.

"Let's go and practise with my bow and arrows," said Piney. "We can shoot till breakfast."

"All right," said Bi. "I mean to go for some pickerel, Indian fashion, while I'm here; and I've got to learn to shoot."

It was easy enough to set up a target out on the lawn; but Bi quickly discovered, as he expressed it, that he was "not one bit of an Indian."

"You'd starve on a bow and arrows," said Piney. "Let me show you."

Bi would hardly have believed it possible for any boy to draw that bowstring so far back, and send an arrow so straight and to such a distance.

"What a thump it gave the target!" he exclaimed. "It's just as well it wasn't a man."

"Or a pane of glass."

"And the Indians shot a good deal better than that."

"Of course they did. Why, they killed deer and bears, and all sorts of animals, with their stone-headed arrows."

“Yes,” said Bi, “and men too. Hullo! Mr. Sadler and Mary are coming. Let him try.”

That was the very thing they were coming for; and cousin Mary stood still, with her beautiful new white straw hat swinging in her hand by its ribbon, while Mr. Sadler took the bow and one of the blunt wooden-headed arrows, and started to see what he could do with them.

“O Susie!” shouted Roxy, on the piazza “They’re bow-and-arrowing out on the lawn.”

“And Mr. Sadler’s going to shoot,” said Susie. “Let’s go see.”

Mr. Sadler had fitted the arrow to the string just then, and was beginning to pull on it: but the bow was harder to bend than he had expected; and just as he was raising it, and was turning towards the target, his finger slipped from the end of the arrow.

Cousin Mary had been looking hard at the target, as if she expected to see that arrow sticking in the middle of it the next moment; but Mr. Sadler suddenly exclaimed, —

“Well, now!”

And Roxy, who was running across the lawn, like a little deer, in short dresses and no bonnet, shouted, —

“O cousin Mary! He’s shooted your new hat.”

Bi and Piney tried hard not to laugh, but the

harder they tried the more they both looked as if they wanted to.

There was no mistake about it, however. There lay Mary's hat, ten feet away from her on the grass, with the arrow sticking mercilessly right through the middle of the crown.

"Oh, never mind!" said Mary, with a very crimson blush. "The arrow isn't hurt a bit."

"But the hat is," said Roxy breathlessly, as she picked it up.

"Glad nobody's head was in it, though," remarked Bi.

"Take another arrow, Mr. Sadler," said Piney. "You made a centre shot that time, anyhow."

Poor Mr. Sadler's face was very much flushed, and he hardly knew what to say; but cousin Mary wore so kind and smiling a look that he just took the arrow from Piney, and turned towards the target.

Such a vigorous pull as he now gave that bow-string!

When he let go, the arrow never paused to make any dents on the target. It went at least twenty feet above any thing so low as that, and on and on, till it was tired out, and tumbled over into the lake.

"Never mind," said Piney. "It'll float ashore. We'll find it some time. There goes the breakfast-bell."

"I'm ready!" exclaimed Bi, as they started for the house.

"Here is your hat, Miss Hunter," said Mr. Sadler, very politely indeed; and Roxy's ears were the only pair among them all that heard her answer, in a very low tone of voice, —

"Thank you, George."

And then Roxy was very sure she heard him say, —

"Mary!" but she did not catch a word of the rest of it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BUMBLEBEES AND HONEY.

HARDLY were the family seated at the breakfast-table that morning, before Roxy asked, —

“Isn’t cousin Mary real good, aunt Keziah? I think so.”

“Why is she so good, my dear?”

“Because Mr. Sadler shooted one of Piney’s arrows right through her nice, beautiful hat.”

“That was very wrong of Mr. Sadler,” said aunt Keziah.

“Oh! but,” said Roxy, “cousin Mary didn’t scold him one bit. She was just as good!”

“Why, Roxy, it was an accident!” exclaimed Mary, with a great blush all over her face. “You don’t suppose Mr. Sadler meant to do it?”

“He didn’t even say he was sorry. He just took another of Piney’s arrows, and shooted it away into the lake.”

“What did Piney say to that?” asked uncle Liph.

"Piney's always good. But I guess he doesn't want to let George have any more arrows."

"Hush!" said her mother. "You mustn't call Mr. Sadler 'George.'"

"Cousin Mary does," began Roxy; and Susie added, —

"Why, that's his first name. I've heard father call him so."

Then aunt Sarah herself turned to Mr. Sadler, and said, —

"Well, George, this is nice. Are you and Mary going to the hay-field with the boys and the children after breakfast?"

"I would, if I were you, George," said uncle Liph; and Roxy wondered what the older people were all laughing at, but she said, —

"If he does, he'd better look out for the bumblebees."

Cousin Mary was looking out of the window very hard, just then, as if she were expecting somebody to come. Perhaps she may have been; for at that moment who should it be but Mrs. Wilbur, Kyle's mother, with a great book in her arms!

"That must be Kyle's prize dictionary!" exclaimed Piney.

"Yes," said his mother; "and she's coming to show it to Keziah."

"Of course," said uncle Liph. "She's proud enough of it."

"Oh, dear! I'd no idee you'd all be at breakfast so late as this," said Mrs. Wilbur, as she now stood still in the open door. "Keziah! This ere's the book the committee gave to Kyle."

She certainly had no reason to complain of aunt Keziah, or of any of the rest, for the way they talked about that book and about her boy. It also looked as if Kyle's mother could hardly have been more proud of him if he had made the dictionary, binding and all, instead of winning it for a declamation prize.

It was of no use for Piney's mother to bring out the prizes and presents which had come to him. They were numerous, to be sure, and they were nice; but not one of them was as big as the dictionary. All of them put together would hardly have equalled the bulk of that one tremendous book, and Mrs. Wilbur plainly looked down upon them as of small account in comparison.

"Now, Mrs. Wilbur," said Piney at last, "we're all going out to the hay-field to get stung. If Kyle wants his share of our bees, we'd like to have him come along."

"I got a prize too," began Roxy, for the third or fourth time; but Mrs. Wilbur answered Piney, —

"I'll send Kyle over, right away; and I do want to say, Mrs. Hunter, for him, he thinks all the world of your Piney."

"So do we," said Roxy. "Guess we do. He was pretty near 'most drowned in the lake yesterday."

"What an escape that was!" said Mrs. Wilbur. "I'm so thankful!"

"And the oxen couldn't run over Susie and me," said Roxy, "'cause we climbed the fence."

"Seems to me Chub has been wonderfully silent," remarked uncle Liph at that moment; but the wonder was all gone when they turned to look at him.

His place at the table, to make sure of his good behavior, was between his mother and aunt Keziah; but for many minutes they had both been very busy thinking of something else.

So had Chub; for he had been thinking of the sugar-bowl, and there it was now in his lap.

Whether he had been eating so very fast, or whether because of the sudden discovery of his misdoings, master Chub began at once to choke and cough, and then to cry; and they all arose from the table before Roxy had a chance to tell Mrs. Wilbur any more about the cattle or her prizes. It was a good deal of a disappointment, but Roxy quickly got over it in the excitement of getting ready for the hay-field and the bees.

Cousin Mary went; and she persisted in wearing her new hat, with the arrow-hole in the top of it. She even refused to let aunt Keziah sew up the hole.

"Of course I wouldn't, if I were she," said Bi. "That's for ventilation. I'm going to have him shoot one like it through the top of every hat I get."

"Hang your hat up out there, then," said Piney. "I'll go for my bow and arrows."

"Not just now," said Bi. "I can wait. Besides, I want George Sadler to fix all my hats. He can do it splendidly."

"Now, Bi!" exclaimed Mary.

"I won't any more," said Bi mischievously. "But then, Mary, not one of us had any notion he was going to shoot just when he did."

They were soon ready, and were all on their way through the barnyard and into the lane. Roxy and Susie looked sharply around them there for the "bad sheep." They did not see him, and Piney told them he had been "banished."

"What does that mean?" asked Susie.

"Why, Susie," said Roxy, "don't you know? He's gone to be washed. Didn't you know they washed sheep?"

"Oh, yes! I know all that. Roxy, there's the Chinee hen."

"That's another one. They're all alike. Aunt Keziah says she's going to set one of 'em on turkey's eggs."

"What for? "

“’Cause they’re so big, — ’most as big as turkeys. Then the young turkeys won’t be any smaller.”

About half way up the lane they came to some bars in the fence ; and Piney let these down, so that they could all walk through. He led them across that field, and a little way down the hillside, and through some more bars ; and then they were in the hay-field. It was a large field, and almost flat ; and they could see, where the men were mowing, that the grass had been very high.

“Isn’t it a pity,” said Susie, “to go and cut it all down ?”

“If they didn’t,” said Roxy, “the barn wouldn’t have any hay in it, and the hens couldn’t hide their nests.”

“No,” said Piney ; “and the cows wouldn’t have any supper in winter, and there wouldn’t be any milk, and Roxy herself wouldn’t have any supper to speak of.”

“Yes, Susie,” said Roxy. “That’s what they make hay for. Don’t you know now ? But it spoils the grass.”

That was certainly a fine field of hay. But one of the mowers made motions to them to stay where they were ; and then, when he came nearer, he shouted out to Piney that they had “just been clean driven away from that easterly swarth by the biggest nest of bumblebees you ever stirred up.

They'll be all mad as sixty, and they'll go for ye, sure!"

"Hurrah, Bi!" shouted Piney. "There's Kyle coming across the meadow. You do as I do."

Out came his handkerchief. He spread it over the back of his head, and down over his ears, and tucked it under his shirt-collar, and put his hat on hard.

"They won't get in through that," he said, as he saw Bi and Mr. Sadler imitating him. Then he gathered a handful of long grass and weeds.

"Get a good brush like that," he said to Bi. "Don't mind 'em at all, unless they 'light on a place where they can sting through."

Cousin Mary and aunt Keziah and the children remained where they were. They even took up rakes, and made believe "make hay;" but they could not help watching Piney and the rest as they went after that big nest of bees and honey.

"Dear me!" said Mary. "I hope they won't get stung."

"It won't kill 'em if they do," said aunt Keziah. "I've broke up bumblebees'-nests myself. Time was when we got a regular bee-tree, out in the woods, every now and then."

"With real bees and honey in it?"

"Yes, whole buckets-full of comb and honey. There isn't any thing of that kind nowadays; only bumblebees and yellow-jackets instead of 'em."

The bee-hunters in that hay-field had no difficulty at all in finding out whereabouts the big nest was. Not only were the mowers able to point it out to them, at a safe distance, but both Kyle and Piney were familiar with the business they were on. More than one disturbed and angry bee made a dash at the party, as they drew nearer the place of danger; but Bi and Mr. Sadler followed the example of the two country boys, and did but brush their enemies away. The only trouble was, that the insects did not seem to know any fear, and charged again and again, no matter how many times they were knocked into the grass.

"They're tough customers," said Bi; but just then Piney shouted, —

"Here it is! It's a big one. Now, Kyle, you keep 'em off me while I take it out. They're a-coming."

He stooped, as he spoke, and began to dig with his fingers in the grass at the side of a large round stone. Not every boy would have had the nerve to pry out that nest, and pick it up; but Piney Hunter did, and all the while Kyle Wilbur was thrashing away like mad, in all directions, against a swarm of furious bumblebees. Bi and Mr. Sadler came running up; and they too were compelled to work with their bunches of grass and weeds, as if they were earning the largest kind of wages.

"Hadn't we better run?" asked Bi.

"Run, then. That's what I'm getting ready for. But keep on whipping. Some'll go after us, but a good many'll stay here. We won't have such a crowd to fight."

It was good generalship, but a good number of the bees did follow them. Piney held the great wad of a nest in one hand, and fought with the other; and somehow he and Kyle got off without a single sting. Perhaps that was because they ran along close together, and kept a good lookout for each other. If a bee alighted upon either of them, he was sure to be quickly brushed away. "In union there is strength," and in division there is weakness. Bi and Mr. Sadler separated as they ran. Mary saw them running, and anxiously exclaimed, —

"O aunt Keziah! Look! The bees are after them."

"Of course they are. Look at Piney! He's got the nest."

Mr. Sadler should have been a wiser young man than to have run in the direction he did. To be sure, he whipped himself free of his assailants, with the exception of one fellow who managed to settle for a moment on his nose: but another of them dashed right on ahead of him; and, while poor cousin Mary was thinking of almost any thing else than her own safety, she felt something dreadfully hot on her under lip.

“O aunt Keziah! I’m stung.”

“Are you, my dear? I’m sorry for that. But they never live long after they’ve lost their sting. Where did he sting you?”

“On my lip. Oh, dear!”

It really pained her very much; and Roxy said to Mr. Sadler, the moment he came near them, —

“There, George, you brought a bee with you, and he’s stung cousin Mary on her lip. It’s awful!”

So he seemed to think, for he at once took his hand away from his nose, and began to say so; but aunt Keziah exclaimed, —

“Nonsense! All that fuss about a bee-sting! Put a little mud on it, and then let’s go and see the mowing.”

In a few moments more, Piney came in with his prize. It was indeed a large nest, with several tablespoonfuls, more or less, of the most delicious honey any of them had ever tasted. So they all said; but for all that, not long after they had tasted it, Mr. Sadler and cousin Mary began to walk away towards the bars. By that time, too, Piney and Bi and Kyle were having a tussle with another lot of bumblebees.

Roxy remarked to Susie, —

“I didn’t get but just the least mite of that honey. Did you? I hope they’ll get some more.”

"So do I," said Susie. "It's the most beautiful honey! It's ever so much better than common bees' honey."

"That's because bumblebees are bigger than honey-bees."

"I s'pose they go all over, too, and find out where to get the best things to make it with."

"Of course they do. Piney says a common bee'll put up with 'most any kind of flowers. He didn't get stung, nor Kyle didn't either."

"Guess I don't want to," said Susie. "Let's follow aunt Keziah, and keep away from where the boys are."

One look at the latter was enough to prove the soundness of that policy, for the boys were particularly busy just then.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HAY-RIDE.

THE fun of the hay-field, for Mary and Mr. Sadler, had been spoiled by two hot-tempered bumblebees; but that was no reason why any of the others should give it up. Susie remarked about it, however, —

“I don’t see why they should have stung Mary. She didn’t hurt ’em.”

“Oh!” replied Roxy, “bumblebees don’t know any better, after the nest’s broke up.”

“But they didn’t touch you or me, or aunt Keziah.”

“Well, the whole hay-field belongs to aunt Keziah, bees and all. Then your face and mine weren’t so high up. Mr. Sadler’s face and cousin Mary’s were right up where the bees were coming.”

“What made you call him George?”

“Oh! I didn’t think. Besides, it’s a prettier name than ‘Mr. Sadler.’”

“Of course it is. Just look at Piney and Bi

and Kyle! They ain't thinking of any thing but bees."

That was about the truth, for the bees of the second nest had succeeded in getting a good sting at all three; and Bi Hunter in particular felt more respect for insects than ever he had before. His handkerchief had slipped out of his neck, and a bumblebee had found that very place to work in. Piney and Kyle had each neglected "one of the places where they can sting right through;" but it was an old story to them, and they did not seem to mind it much.

As for aunt Keziah, she was interested in seeing what a remarkably good crop of hay she was going to have; and Roxy and Susie also began to turn their wise attention to it. They had brought their dolls with them, as a matter of course; and it was capital fun to put them to sleep, and make houses for them in the low soft mounds of hay, where it had been pitched into hay-cocks. They even ventured to kick the hay about in the windrows, where the men had raked it up; and there was happiness in that.

"Isn't hay nice?" said Susie.

"Of course it is," said Roxy. "But they're going to load a wagon pretty soon. Then we'll have a splendid ride to the barn."

"Oh, yes, a hay-ride!" shouted Susie.

A good deal of the hay in that field was already sufficiently cured to be carried home; and before noon a great wagon, drawn by two horses, with a wide wooden frame on top of the wagon-box, was slowly pulled along from one heap of hay to another.

"Let's go and see them pitch it on," said Roxy. "It takes ever so much hay to load a wagon."

So it did; and every time a man put his fork into a hay-cock, and lifted a great mass of it to pitch it upon the wagon, he seemed to let loose a fragrant puff of what Roxy called "hay smell."

"How strong they are!" said Susie. "And how nice it does smell!"

"They have to be stronger as soon as it gets piled up high," said Roxy. "Oh, how fast they work!"

So they did, indeed; for aunt Keziah was there looking at them, and she knew just how long it should take to load a wagon like that with hay, with two men to pitch and one on top to spread it around neatly after it got there.

Roxy remarked to Susie, as to that, —

"Piney says that to have aunt Keziah looking on anywhere is just as good as hiring another man."

Piney and his two friends were getting pretty warm over their fun by this time; and Bi seemed to be troubled by a queer feeling, that to rob quite so many bees was not exactly right.

"The bees own the nests," he said to himself, "and so it's their honey;" but he had to give up making Kyle and Piney see it that way. Kyle told him, —

"The bees own the honey till haying-time, Bi: then it's ours. Why, don't you see how it is? Even if they sting a feller, the sting's his then, and they have to leave it in him."

Bi felt of the back of his neck where a hot lump was growing, and he had little pity in his heart for at least one bee.

"I say, boys!" he exclaimed, as he looked across the field, "they've loaded that wagon, and they're lifting the children on it for a ride. Just hear 'em scream! S'pose we go and ride with 'em."

"All right," said Piney. "We'll go; but who did that last yell?"

It had not come from the lips of either Roxy or Susie, and the next thing they saw was aunt Keziah running across towards them from where she had been standing. She was whipping her head frantically with her apron.

"There's a bee after her!" said Kyle.

"That's too bad," said Bi.

Piney was already on a run to aunt Keziah's assistance; but before he reached her she stopped, stood still a moment, and then walked slowly and dignifiedly back towards the hay-wagon.

"What is the matter, aunt Keziah?" asked Roxy, from the top of the load. "Did they try to lift you up?"

She and Susie had enjoyed the excitement of being lifted, but had screamed pretty loudly, nevertheless.

"Did he sting you?" shouted Piney, at the same moment.

"Sting?" said aunt Keziah. "What do I care for a bee-sting? I'm going back to the house, along with this load. I've been fooling my time away here long enough."

Somehow or other, though, her right hand would go up to her ear, every now and then, for all the world as if something were smarting there and needed rubbing.

"Come on, boys," shouted Piney. "Let's climb up. They're putting on the binder."

"What's that for?" asked Bi, as a long, heavy pole was laid along the middle of the high-piled load of hay, and tied down hard at each end with ropes and a chain.

"That? Why, that's the binder. It holds the hay on when we're going down hill. It would slide over the horses if it wasn't for that, and all of us'd go with it."

Bi put his hand on the binder, and determined not to slide. So did Roxy and Susie, but Kyle and

Piney seemed to feel altogether safe and at home on a load of hay.

"Roxy," asked Susie, "do you think aunt Keziah was really stung?"

"She didn't say she was."

"But she's feeling of her ear."

"Well, I don't know. Maybe there were some other people's bumblebees over here with ours."

The wagon was soon in motion, and it tilted this way and that way over the rough places of the field in a style that was more than a little exciting.

How those two girls did hold on to their brothers!

"Does hay ever upset?" asked Susie.

"Does it, Piney?" said Bi.

"Oh, yes! sometimes. But not on a straight, easy road like this. We're all safe enough. Hold on tight when you're going down the lane; that's all."

Roxy and Susie screamed with delight and fear, as the load of hay climbed the ascent to the bars leading into the lane. Then they screamed and laughed still louder as it rolled lumberingly down to the barnyard. Right in front of the wide-open barn-doors, the horses stopped.

"I see now," said Bi, "why barn-doors are made so high. Why, the load can't but just get in!"

"That's so," said Piney. "We must all get down, or we'll be scraped off."

“’Twon’t be the easiest thing” —

“Slip down along the binder to the back end, Bi. I’ll let the girls down to you.”

Bi did so, and Roxy and Susie clambered close behind him. They were trembling a little, over the steep prospect before them; but Roxy said bravely, —

“Piney knows, Susie. It’s awful high, but we’ll get down.”

Aunt Keziah was right there, with her hand on her ear, telling one of the farm-hands, a very tall and strong young man, to —

“Help down those children, now, so they won’t break their blessed little necks.”

Could she possibly have been angry at that bumblebee for stinging her? She would not have said so for any thing; but she was evidently raspyish, and in something of a hurry to get to the house.

Bi took hold of Roxy’s hand, and let her slip, slip, slip, down the smooth surface of the hay, until the man below could reach up and touch her. Then he let go; and just as she was screaming, “O aunt Keziah!” she was caught by a pair of strong brown hands, and was landed safely on the ground.

“Come, Susie,” she said at once. “Come right along. Don’t be scared. It just isn’t any thing at all.”

Susie thought differently, but she took Bi's hand, and began to slide; and then, almost before she was ready for it, she was standing beside her cousin. Kyle Wilbur was there too, for he had swung himself down from the forward end of the wagon. It was easy enough for a pair of active boys, like Piney and Bi, to find their way to the ground without help. They would have scorned asking any; but there was a thought in Bi's mind, when he was yet sticking to the binder, that ladders were a great invention.

While all these things had been going on, however, Mr. Sadler and cousin Mary had long since reached the farmhouse.

"George," said Mary, as they went through the bars into the barnyard, "does your nose pain you much?"

"Don't mention it!" he exclaimed. "Only to think, though, how your lip must hurt!"

"I don't mind that at all, but it's beginning to swell."

"So is my nose."

"Aunt Keziah said that we were to put on some mud."

"I've heard that that is good. We can get some at the lake-shore."

So they hurried along to the landing-place, and there they had no difficulty in stirring up some

soft clay that made the best of mud for a bee-sting.

Cousin Mary was compelled to put it on first; and Mr. Sadler laughed, in spite of the pain in his nose, when he saw the change made in her very pretty face by that patch of mud just below her mouth. Then it was her turn to laugh; for he clapped over his own hurt a piece of wet clay as large as half a peach, and his nose was not naturally a small one.

“There’s always plenty of fun to be had in the country,” he said, “if you only know where to find it.”

“We have found a little more than we intended, I think, this morning,” said Mary. “Now we’d better go to the house.”

They carried the materials for any amount of fun with them when they went. The moment they walked in, uncle Liph burst into a roar of laughter. Then grandfather Hunter looked at them, and he laughed, and so did aunt Sarah and Piney’s mother; and then Chub dropped his doll, and shouted, —

“O Mary! Wash your face right away. It’s dirty.”

So it seemed to be; but Chub took a look at Mr. Sadler also, and asked him, with a puzzled air, —

“Where did you tumble down?”

Chub’s own nose had more than once been

brought into the house by him, in sorrow and lamentation, with the effects of a tumble in the mud yet visible upon it.

"We've been stung by bees!" exclaimed Mary. "The boys were breaking up a nest."

"Chub is right, then," said Piney's mother. "Wash your face, and I'll get some spirits of harts-horn. It's better than mud."

"I think it will look better, too," remarked aunt Sarah.

The remedy was brought in a twinkling, the nose and the lip were washed, and then neither Mary nor Mr. Sadler seemed sorry to have an excuse for spending the rest of that morning in the house.

"Haying is capital fun," said uncle Liph; "but when there is too much help from bumblebees, I'd rather turn over my share to the boys."

"They were wild over it," said Mary. "Why, they're at it yet."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE MATCH GAME.

AUNT KEZIAH MERRILL did not go back to the hay-field that day. None of the older people went ; and Roxy and Susie, even, were prevailed upon to stay and play in the neighborhood of the house.

"Guess there won't be any bumblebees about here to-day," said Roxy.

"Why won't there?" asked Susie.

"Oh! because they'll all want to be at home, in the hay-field, trying to take care of their honey."

"And their little bees?"

"There ain't any little bees. They're all big enough to sting."

"Don't they ever have any baby bees?"

"Nobody ever saw any, I guess."

"We never have any kind of bees in the city."

"You mean flying-bees. Don't you have other kinds of bees?"

"Besides stinging-bees?"

"Yes. Don't you ever have any sewing-bees?"

"Sewing-bees!" exclaimed Susie. "Do they sew with their stings?"

"Why, Susie! It's where all the folks come, and bring their own sewing-needles."

"Oh! that's it, is it?"

"Yes," said Roxy. "It takes a good many people to make a sewing-bee. We had one at our house last winter. Everybody comes to a sewing-bee. They come to sew for the heathen, and to eat cake."

"And they work like bees?"

"Guess they do. Aunt Keziah says they eat as if they'd been living in the poorhouse."

"The poorhouse? What's that?"

"Piney says Hawknose John told him it was white man's reservation."

Susie had to ask aunt Sarah about it, before she could understand what a poorhouse was. Aunt Keziah told her she was too busy to answer silly questions.

"It's her ear," explained Roxy afterwards. "It's more'n twice as big as her other ear."

"Yes," said Susie. "Isn't it dreadful?"

"It's awful dreadful. Piney says that's where the hills come from."

"The hills, Roxy?"

"All the little hills. He says they're just places where the country's been stung by a big bumble-bee."

"I don't believe it."

"Piney doesn't either."

"Then he shouldn't say so," said Susie.

When the boys came back from the hay-field, they were hot and tired, and that was a quiet evening at the farmhouse. Almost the entire household seemed willing to go to bed early; and Bi, at least, was a late riser next morning. He managed to get to the breakfast-table just as Piney returned from driving his cows to pasture.

The table was pretty full; and aunt Keziah sat in her usual place, wearing a frilled cap that covered both her ears.

"Mother!" suddenly exclaimed Roxy. "We must wait for Mr. Sadler: he isn't down."

"That's so," said Piney. "Guess he did too much haying yesterday."

"He?" said uncle Liph. "He was up before any of you. He had to hurry back to the city on business. He told me to say good-by to all of you, for him."

There was a general expression of surprise at so sudden and unexpected a flitting; but the older people did not seem half so much astonished as were the younger. It was curious, however, how heartily they laughed when Roxy remarked, a little later, —

"Cousin Mary, your lip isn't swelled a bit this morning. I should think it would be awful."

"That'll do very well," said grandfather Hunter; and Mary exclaimed, —

"O Roxy!"

There was a larger mail than usual that day; and when uncle Liph finished reading his letters, he arose from his chair, drew a long breath, and said, —

"There! I'm glad Sadler went when he did. Aunt Keziah, I'm afraid we'll have to cut our visit short a little."

"Bad news? Business?"

"Business, but not bad. We can stay a few days; then we must stay in the city for a fortnight or so, and then we can go to the seashore."

There was enough to talk about now; but it all wound up, so far as the boys were concerned, with uncle Liph's decision, —

"Bi needn't go when I do. We can talk about it again."

"Hurrah for that!" shouted Piney. "Bi, we'll have a good time. — Uncle Liph, I'm going to teach him how to plough, — going to begin to-morrow."

"So he'll know how before I go away?"

"Well, I'll tell you how it is. There's a piece of land over by the woods, beyond the lake, that never was ploughed in the world. Aunt Keziah had the trees cut off years and years ago; and she

says it's ready to break up now, so she can put wheat on it next fall."

"Has she hired you and Bi to plough it for her?"

"Not exactly; but all the while she talked about it, I thought what fun it would be for Bi to see that thing ploughed. It's by the woods, you know. Best kind of a picnic."

"I'll go!" exclaimed Roxy. "So'll Susie. Cousin Mary can go too, now George is gone."

"It won't be done till day after to-morrow," said aunt Keziah suddenly. "There's only ten acres of it. It's good land, but there's work on it after it's broke up. I don't see what fun there'd be in lookin' on; but they could picnic all over the woods, as much as they wanted to."

There was not much more to be said just then; and when Bi and Piney got out of the house, they stood and looked at one another for a moment.

"Bi," said Piney, "did you ever see a stupider day than this is?"

"It's kind o' stupid."

"Do you want to go fishing?"

"No, I don't care to fish."

"We can have a swim."

"I don't feel like swimming."

"We did too much running yesterday, — too many bees. It's the stupidest kind of a day."

Just then they heard a shrill voice at the gate, shouting, —

“Boys, I’ve got something for ye. Biggest kind!”

“Hullo, Kyle! Is that you?”

“You and Bi’ll be wanted at the village to-morrer. Match game of base-ball. Country boys against village boys, and draw cuts for Bi ’cause he’s a city boy.”

That was almost enough to wake them up, but somehow it did not excite them particularly. The game had to be talked about, but it seemed too much like work. There would be running in it, and doing something; and all they cared to do just then was just what they and Kyle did. They all got into the old scow, and raised the sail, and found there was just enough of lazy wind stirring to carry them gently away down the lake, while they lay around in the boat without stirring hand or foot.

A swim and some supper helped use up the day; and the evening had another sail in it, with cousin Mary and aunt Sarah and Piney’s mother in the boat. The water was smooth, and the moonlight was all that could be asked for; but nothing could take away the solemn fact that some days in the country will be stupid, in spite of any thing anybody can do.

Even cousin Mary was uncommonly silent; and,

if the whole truth were known, the only people in that farmhouse who lay awake and talked after they went to bed, that night, were Roxy and Susie. They did, until at last Roxy asked, "Susie, did you speak?" and, while she listened for Susie to answer, her own eyelids came slowly together; and when they opened again it was because the morning sun was looking in at the window, and next day had come.

"There, Piney!" exclaimed Bi, at about that moment, as he sprang out of bed, "I'm ready to go for the cows with you this time."

"You ain't so stiff as you were yesterday, are you?"

"I should say I wasn't."

"Could you play ball?"

"I guess I can; but I don't like the notion of being drawn cuts for."

"We'll win you for our side, see'f we don't."

Piney was a little too sure about that. Within an hour after breakfast there were knots of boys, of all sizes, all over the green; and he and Bi were among them. So were a good many fellows Bi knew, and some he had never seen; and when the choosing began for the game, he saw that he was looked upon as a sort of prize. He even heard one boy propose to "put him in a hat;" and another, to "toss him up, and see which side he'll come down on."

No offence was meant; and he good-naturedly consented, as he called it, "to be raffled for."

Piney himself drew the straw for his side, out of a lot that were shaken up in an empty tomato-can.

"I've got a good one, Bi!" he shouted. "There weren't many that were longer than that."

It was a respectable straw, to be sure; but the village boy who drew next instantly exclaimed, —

"Measure! Measure! Mine's as long as yours is, Piney Hunter."

The two straws were held up, side by side, for a moment; and then there was another shout, —

"Half an inch! Half an inch!"

"Yes, Piney," said Kyle Wilbur dolefully, "they've won him. Why didn't you pull a longer straw? Lost the game by half an inch. It's awful!"

"We haven't lost it yet," said Piney. "Come on, boys: we'll show 'em. We can afford to let 'em have some chance."

It was a hot day, and playing ball was hard work. Even Kyle Wilbur's face grew red in a little while, and Piney's was a sight to see. Bi did his duty by the side he was on, but it was well for them that they had him. It was a good deal as Kyle remarked, —

"He's all the chance they've got."

The village people came out to the edges of the

green to watch that game; and farmers halted in their wagons, and looked on; and it looked, for ever so long, like "an even thing." There was cheering over good runs and good hits, and fun over failures of all sorts; but the end came at last, and just about dinner-time Kyle Wilbur sat down upon the grass, exclaiming, —

"Just as I told you, Piney. We're busted. Bi did it for us."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BATTLE-GROUND.

KYLE WILBUR had been invited to the picnic, as a matter of course; and he was on hand promptly the next morning. His mother came with him, as she said, —

“To ask Keziah Merrill what on earth put it into her head to break up sech a piece of land as that in dry weather.”

It was fine weather for a day in the woods, whatever it was for any thing else. The horses and ploughs and ploughmen had all gone to their work before that time. They had all gone by a round-about way, through the lane and the fields; but the people who were to have the good time, without the hard work, went by water. They made about as good a boat-load as it was well for the old scow to undertake; for, when all were on board, there were aunt Keziah and Mary, and Roxy, Susie, and Chub, besides the boys, the dolls, and the baskets of luncheon. Piney had to row the boat, for the

wind was dead against them. He seemed to have something on his mind, and it came out as they drew near the shore.

"There's where I found my arrowhead," he said to Mary, — "right there in the woods. Maybe I'll find another to-day."

"Why?"

"Well, there was a battle with the Indians once, right over here somewhere. Hawknose John says the worst of it was on the very spot where they're going to do the ploughing."

"A battle?" shouted Bi. "Which side won it?"

"Nobody knows, exactly."

"Were the white men defeated?"

"Aunt Keziah says both sides were whipped, and ran away. Her grandfather Merrill was a boy then."

"Was he in the fight?" asked Bi.

That stirred up aunt Keziah, and she said, —

"Why, Bi Hunter! Didn't you know? Boys could shoot in them days. They say he used to tell that he never ran so fast in all his life, and nobody was after him neither. All the Indians were running t'other way."

It was warm walking up the hill, through the woods, after they got ashore. Cousin Mary and the children were glad to sit down in the shade for

a little; but aunt Keziah was there for business, and she and the boys went on into the field.

"Piney," shouted one of the ploughmen, "you and your cousin'd better go back and foller up that furrer. We've been a-turnin' up all sorts of things. Hunt for 'em."

"Hurrah!" shouted Piney. "Hawknose John was right. We've struck the right place."

"The battle-field?" said Bi, almost breathlessly.

"Come on. We'll find something. It was all covered with big trees then, for both sides to hide behind; and they peppered each other ever so long."

"How my father would like to be here!" said Bi. "It's what he cares more for than most any thing else."

Kyle followed in silence, and the three went back to the place where the ploughing began. They walked along in the deep furrows slowly, stooping to examine every stick and stone. They had not gone far before Bi sprang up, exclaiming, —

"Hullo, Piney! What's this?"

"It's as big as a dollar."

"It isn't any kind of money. It's bigger'n a dollar."

"Rusted green," said Kyle. "Must be copper, or brass."

"Why, Bi," said Piney, as he took it in his hand,

and turned it over. "I know what that is. They all wore 'em. It's a medal."

"Father'll know all about it, or grandfather."

"It's a big find, anyhow. Some chief had it on, and got killed. I haven't found a thing."

Piney's eager eyes were already searching the furrow again, and it was hardly a minute before his turn came.

"Hurrah, boys! Here's an old gun-barrel bent half double, and rusted all up. It's an old flint-lock. I wonder if some of our fellows bent it over a redskin's head."

"Mebbe so," said Kyle; "but it spiled the gun."

The fever of it grew hot as they looked at that used-up weapon, and thought of what it might have been used for. On they went, till Piney once more sang out, —

"Another arrowhead, Bi!"

"It's bigger'n the one you found in the woods," began Kyle; but he made a jump forward, and the next instant they heard him exclaim, —

"Well, now! If I haven't found a war-club! 'Tisn't rotted a bit neither."

"Kyle!" said Piney. "What if I'd had that to speak my piece with!"

It was a curious thing, when they came to examine it, — a thick strong piece of what looked like iron-wood about three feet long; and at one end of

it was a heavy piece of flint, shaped like a very long egg, that went right through the wood and fitted tightly.

"It looks for all the world as if it grew there," said Bi. "The wood is close around it."

"So it did," said Piney. "The stone didn't grow, but the wood did. Hawknose John told me. They made a split through a young sapling, and put the stone through, and tied it hard above and below; and then the tree grew right on all the same, and held it tighter and tighter."

"Took a long time to get a club that way," said Bi.

"And this one had to have a big Indian to do much with it," remarked Kyle. "Bi, do you s'pose your father'd let me give it to him?"

"He'd be glad enough. There isn't such another club in his collection."

"Well, you see, I fetched over the stone hatchet this morning for him. I stuck it in the corner by the gate. This might as well go with it."

Kyle spoke very modestly, and seemed quite encouraged by Bi's assurances.

"All right, if he'll take 'em," he said at last. "Now let's pitch in, and find something else."

If they had been a lot of miners hunting for gold, they could hardly have gone over that ground more faithfully. Roxy and Susie came to help

them ; while aunt Keziah sat under a tree, and told Mary all she had ever heard about the battle.

Roxy searched away ahead of the boys, and was quite disappointed because she did not find "something awful." It troubled her a good deal, too, when Piney found another arrowhead on some ground she had walked over. Suddenly she made a dash forward.

"Piney! Piney! I've got it! Isn't this a battle?"

"That? Why, Roxy, that's an old sheep's head. It's a bone."

"A bone?" said Bi. "Well, we haven't found any other bones."

"No," said Piney. "All the men that ran away carried their bones with 'em. This bone belonged to a sheep. Guess he wasn't in that fight."

"Couldn't the Indians have made a battle of him?" asked Roxy.

There was a good deal of fun made over her idea of war, and the part a very "bad sheep" might take in a fight with red Indians ; but that was the only bone they found, although they searched till they were weary.

On the whole, the hunt for curiosities was pretty successful ; but they were all ready to give it up when Mary called them to come to luncheon.

Chub had done some hunting on his own account,

with Mary to keep him from straying; and he had seen a squirrel and a chipmunk. Nothing would satisfy the three boys but building a fire, without any thing to cook in it; and after that the picnic was a lazy sort of a ramble. Still Bi saw squirrels, and talked of hunting them; and on his way home he saw his first woodchuck. And aunt Keziah was well pleased with her ploughing. It was a nice, quiet, pleasant kind of a time, and not one of them all dreamed what its consequences might be.

It was the middle of the afternoon, to the surprise of all of the party, when the boat again reached the landing. Then there was a sort of procession to the house, and Kyle ran around to the gate for his stone hatchet. He brought it back to the side door, and there were grandfather Hunter and uncle Liph eagerly examining the curiosities. Kyle had had no idea they would really care for them.

“What!” uncle Liph was just saying. “Six new arrowheads? Why, this one’s big enough for a spearhead. That war-club is a noble one.”

“Here’s the hatchet, sir,” said Kyle, holding it out.

“Hatchet? That’s so,” said grandfather. “Liph, it’s a rare specimen. Capital!”

Kyle colored with delight, but said not a word; and Piney came to help him with, —

"Why, uncle Liph, that and the club are Kyle's present to you. Bi said you'd take 'em."

"Take 'em?" said uncle Liph. "Now, Kyle, my boy, I thank you ever so much" — He stopped short, and for nearly half a minute he seemed to be thinking what to do about it. Then he held out his hand to Kyle, and said, —

"Kyle Wilbur, how would you like to visit the city?"

"Like it? Well, sir, — yes, sir, — so I would. I guess so. I was never there in my life, sir."

"Well, now, Kyle, I'm going home next Monday; and the next Monday after that Bi's coming too, and Piney's to come with him for a visit. I'd be glad to have you come along with them. We'll see that you have a good time if you do."

Poor Kyle! It was almost too much for him, and he hardly knew what to say. It sounded to him a good deal like a promise of a trip into fairy-land. He blushed and stammered, and gave it up; and uncle Liph said, —

"Now, Kyle, you go home, and ask your mother. Tell her I'll furnish tickets to go and come, and I'll take care of you while you're there. Show you all my curiosities. Tell her you'll see the houses and the streets, and the ships in the harbor, and the forts and the ocean, and I'll send you back to her safe and sound."

Kyle's eyes seemed to be growing bigger all the time, but he was not the only astonished boy. That had been the first thing Piney himself had heard about his visit to the city. It had been planned without consulting him; and now aunt Keziah exclaimed, —

“Do look at that boy! Piney, you're not going to burst, are you?”

“I'd like to do something. — Mother, are you going to let us go?”

“Yes, my son, — both of you. Roxy's to visit Susie.”

“O Chub!” shouted Roxy, as she hugged her fat little brother. “Did you hear that? I'm going to the city. It's where the oshung is; and Piney's going too, and so is Kyle Wilbur; and it'll scare him half to death.”

“I'll go and ask my mother,” said Kyle slowly, as he now began to edge away. “I guess she'll let me go. It's only for a week, and Bill Young can go after my cows while I'm gone.”

“I'll see her about it, tell her,” said aunt Keziah, and he was out of the gate in a moment. There was no room for doubt as to what Mrs. Wilbur would say to a matter like that, so far as consenting went; but she may have been partly wrong, as well as partly right, when she said to Kyle's father, —

"That's what comes of his speakin' so well at the exhibition. That there flint thing hadn't any thing to do with it, nor the club either. What do city people keer for that kind of trash? Go? Of course he's to go, and I'll get him ready."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAST WEEK IN THE COUNTRY.

GRANDFATHER and uncle Liph, and aunt Sarah and cousin Mary, all set out for the city on the following Monday; and there was a great deal of excitement to be had in seeing them go. Roxy's last instructions to Mary were, —

“If you see Mr. Sadler, don't forget to tell him I'm coming.”

Somehow or other, however, the moment the travellers were out of sight, it seemed as if the whole country, farmhouse, lakes, and all, had undergone a sort of change. It did not come to Bi and Susie, and some of the older people, as it did to the other boys and Roxy; but Kyle Wilbur's first remark, after the carryall vanished beyond the turn in the road, expressed his feelings exactly:—

“I say, Piney, what on earth are we fellers going to do with this here week?”

“We've just got to,” said Piney; and precisely

what he meant by it, neither he nor anybody else could have guessed.

That afternoon they all went in swimming, and then Bi went with them after the cows; but he found himself answering questions about the city until, as he said,—

“Tell you what it is, boys, if you keep on, you’ll know twice as much as I do. You’d better wait till you get there.”

“Hope it won’t run away before that,” said Kyle. “It kind o’ seems to me as if there was some sort of humbug about it.”

“It’ll all be there,” said Bi, and then he and Piney went to the house for supper; but aunt Keziah took note, afterwards, that Piney did not win a single game of chess that evening. His main ambition, during the days that followed, was to make things pleasant for Bi. He had plenty of help, and succeeded capitally. As for Susie, she had only too much care taken of her happiness, and went to bed tired out every night. She and Roxy had the lake-shore mainly to themselves; for the boys were rarely visible, except at or near meal-times, and not always then.

As for Mrs. Wilbur, hardly had she given her consent to the proposed journey, before she began to see tribulation before her. As to Kyle himself, he could have his hair cut by the village barber,

and he could be lectured on the subject of behavior whenever he came within hearing; but then, there was his clothing. What was good enough for him or any other boy to wear in and about Parable Centre might not be as well adapted to the great city, or to a visit among stylish people. The Wilburs were prosperous farmers, and had plenty of what is called "a good opinion of themselves;" but the proper time for dressing up Kyle with any pains had never arrived before. It was a great problem; and every part and parcel of it had to be taken over and submitted, confidentially and anxiously, to aunt Keziah. Mrs. Wilbur went over to the house again and again, and obtained a great deal of help and comfort; but some of both came in aunt Keziah's own way. It was not in Mrs. Wilbur's last visit, by any means, that she was told, —

"Overcoat? I'd say so! Yes; and he'd better take his skates too, so's to be all ready if there should come a summer freeze."

"Now, Keziah, jest don't. It's a tryin' piece of business. I do want him to appear well, and he's never travelled before."

"He'll know more'n he does now, before he gets back, or I'm mistaken."

"Of course he will. But I'm some troubled about his ever getting there. Them three boys,

and two bits of girls, a-goin' all that distance alone! Think of it, Keziah! It's a resk."

"Alone? Humph! The boys might. I'd trust Piney to take care of Bi and Kyle. I'm going along myself, to keep track of Roxy and Susie."

"You be? I declare! I didn't know that. And you can keep an eye on Kyle."

"When he's in sight, I can. Better let him shift for himself a little."

"But, Keziah, I'm troubled some about his eating."

"Kyle's eating?"

"He's getting on sech an awful appetite. I'm ashamed of him."

"I'll see't he gets enough. They set a good table at Liph Hunter's. He won't starve."

"'Tisn't that, Keziah: it's his manners. You mustn't let him make a pig of himself."

"Don't you worry 'bout that. Let him eat. Mebbe, if you do, he'll weigh something some day. I'd like to see him flesh up."

"Now, Keziah Merrill, do you mean to say I don't give that boy enough to eat?"

"No, I don't. All I mean is, that travelling is hungry business, and you mustn't stint him."

"I won't, then. You keep an eye on him though. I'm jest awful glad you're a-goin' along."

Kyle himself pretended to take but a moderate

interest in the questions which troubled his mother; but she should have seen him in his own room, once or twice, trying different ways of tying his necktie, and brushing his hair. She would then have better understood the state of his mind.

Roxy's mother would not, at any hour of the day or night, have been able to detect in her a single symptom of anxiety of any kind. She was going, and that was quite enough for her; and in the mean time she and Susie had their hands more than full. They sometimes came into the house in such a condition of hair and faces and clothing as to fill other people's hands, also, with a job of setting them "to rights."

If Piney had any problems on his mind, he solved them in his own way. He found a hat in the village precisely like Bi's own; and before Saturday night he had so attended to his affairs that he felt entirely safe and easy. When he and Bi walked off together, on Sunday morning, towards the village, aunt Keziah remarked to his mother, —

"Elizabeth, do you see that?"

"See what, Keziah?"

"Why, Piney. He's been at work so they sha'n't know he's from the country. He's done it too."

There was a good deal of partiality in that decision of aunt Keziah's, and his mother's opinion was also a little one-sided; but Bi's criticism could be

more safely trusted. He said to himself, as they walked along, —

“Green? Well, yes, of course: he does look a little green. Anybody’ll know he doesn’t belong in the city, but that’s about all they’ll be able to say.”

Sunday was a long day; and none of the young people got to sleep as soon as usual, although they all were sent to bed early. There was no need whatever to call one of them in the morning, for they were all up and dressed in ample season. Piney insisted on driving his cows to pasture, but there was just a little spice of hypocrisy in the effort he was making to seem to take things coolly. Kyle Wilbur came over just after breakfast to say that he was ready; and his mother came with him to say she did not know exactly what, to aunt Keziah. As for the latter, she was always ready, and would have scorned the idea of getting herself excited about any thing.

“As if,” she said to Piney’s mother, “I need to lose my seven senses over a little trip to the city with a lot of children!”

“She can’t mean us,” said Bi to Piney. “We’re not children.”

She did mean them, nevertheless; but her thoughts ran mainly after Roxy and Susie, and both of them needed a little running after.

One of the farm-hands drove the big lumber-wagon around to the gate; for such a party, and all its baggage, was too much for the carryall. Then came a grand five minutes of kissing, and saying good-by to all that remained behind of the two families. There were five other boys, living in the neighborhood, lingering around to see the going away; and every boy of them wished he had a right to get into that lumber-wagon, and set out for the great, wonderful, unknown world that was dimly known to him as "the city."

"Kyle," said Mrs. Wilbur, "now, don't you forget a single word I've told ye."

"Good-by, Piney. Good-by, Roxy," said their mother. "Good-by, Bayard, and give my love to them all."

Piney tried hard to say once more, "Good-by, mother;" but he could not quite make it out. It was a queer thing. He had never felt just so before in all his life. But then, he had never before been away from that farmhouse for more than one day at a time; and it seemed to him, for a moment, as if the city might be somewhere on the other side of the world, and as if he might not see his mother again for a whole year. Then the driver cracked his whip, and the five boys hurrahed; and they were off.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN THE GREAT CITY.

THERE is almost always more than one road from one place to another. Aunt Keziah had decided to go to the city by the longer road, because it was so much the pleasanter. A good deal more could be seen on the way. The lumber-wagon went only to the village; and there a long-bodied omnibus was waiting to carry the whole party, with four or five other people, over to Parable Four Corners. A railway, that ran almost due north and south, went right through the middle of the Corners. When it was put through that village, three frame-houses had to be moved to other lots, and a barn was pulled down altogether, as Piney told Bi.

A railway-train, going north, came puffing along to the station-house platform in less than twenty minutes after the omnibus discharged its passengers. Then, for about an hour, aunt Keziah had her hands full in keeping Roxy and Susie in their seats. What they wanted was to put their heads

out of the car-windows, and "see if we haven't 'most got there."

Getting there, just now, meant reaching the large town where they should all go on board of another railway-train bound for the east. They did get there in due time; but if Kyle Wilbur and Piney and the girls had not all seen that town before, they could not afterwards have been at all sure as to this visit. They could hardly see any thing else until they saw themselves safely seated in the other train, and heard the whistle blow, and knew they were once more a-going. This time every mile they travelled carried them nearer the city; while before, and as long as they were moving northward, they experienced a sad feeling of being farther from it.

"There!" said Roxy. "Kyle, don't you feel better? I do."

Kyle had been the silent member of the party thus far; and his only answer was, —

"I guess I do, — some."

His behavior was therefore all his mother could have asked; but there was one feature of his present trial which Bi could not have understood at all, and from which Piney did not suffer.

They were in a parlor-car.

It was too wonderfully fine for comfortable endurance; and Kyle wondered and wondered why even

Roxy should feel so entirely at home. They rode at least a hundred miles before Kyle gained any sort of a victory over the elegance of that railway palace; and even then he was worried by a strange sensation that it did not fit him at all. It fitted Roxy exactly; and, during the same time, she had made the acquaintance of three old gentlemen, and one old lady, and of a blue-eyed girl of her own size, with flaxen curls that made aunt Keziah think of candle-wickings ready to dip.

It was a grand ride, in spite of the heat of that last day of June; and there was plenty of daylight left when aunt Keziah woke up Roxy from the sofa in one corner of the car, where she had fallen asleep, and said to her, —

“Come, dear. This is Albany. We shall not ride any farther to-night.”

“O aunt Keziah!” was about all Roxy could think of at that moment; but she was wide awake enough by the time she reached the hotel to which aunt Keziah, with Bi’s assistance, managed to guide them all.

It was the finest hotel that Piney or Kyle had ever seen, but they did not say so. There had been a “family council” before leaving home; and it had been decided that the children should not ride all night, and that the whole party should have a daylight steamboat trip down the Hudson. Bi

had been on that noble river before ; but neither of his two friends had ever seen so much river-water at once, nor had they looked upon a steamboat until that day.

After supper Bi took them down to the steamboat-wharf, and gave them a fine opportunity to draw long breaths, and feel as if they would like to travel all over the world right away.

It did not take long for three such boys to get a good look at the State House, and a number of other buildings and places ; but, before they again reached the hotel, Roxy had three several times remarked, —

“ Now, aunt Keziah, ain't you scared about them ? Will they know the way back ? ”

“ If they don't, somebody'll show 'em. I guess Bi can take care of 'em.”

“ If he can't, Piney can ; but it's an awful long time.”

The boys would have been quite willing to have made it an hour or two longer ; but Kyle stood in great awe of aunt Keziah, and it was he who insisted upon an early return to the hotel.

It was a romantic adventure, even to sleep all night in such a hotel as that ; and it was so much so, that those three boys hardly slept at all. Even Bi lay awake a while, thinking of what a time he had been having, and wondering what he

should do with his guests after he got them to the city.

"No lakes," he said to himself, "no boating to speak of, not any fishing; nothing, that I can see, except Fourth of July, and the soldiers. The fact is, the city isn't the country, no way you can fix it. They'll be awfully sick of it before the week's out."

That was not exactly what they were looking forward to; and when, at last, Kyle Wilbur went to sleep, he found himself dreaming dreams that seemed like a queer mixture of Parable Centre, the Arabian Nights, Piney, Bi, and himself.

Aunt Keziah had her whole party on board the steamboat in excellent season Tuesday morning, and there was no need at all for Roxy to be so anxious lest one of the boys should get left behind. As for Susie, the pride of the trip to her, thus far, was that she had succeeded in treating it as if she had done just that sort of thing before, and knew all about it.

Bi Hunter knew the Hudson pretty well, or thought he did; but Piney had been a little too thoughtful. He had bought, at the hotel, a little pamphlet "guide-book," that gave an account of every spot worth looking at on either shore. It also gave an account of a number of things and places they could not see at all from the steamboat;

but, as Bi told them, "that was only to fill up, after they'd told all there was to tell, and had some more paper." They missed a few miles of scenery while they were down in the cabin eating dinner; but Kyle said he should remember it all just as well, from reading the descriptions in the guide-book.

Kyle was at last beginning to talk a little, but Piney grew more and more silent and thoughtful. He was steaming into a new world, and the idea of it seemed to weigh upon him. He helped aunt Keziah look out for Roxy and Susie. He stared at towns and villages and hills and great jutting headlands, and he wondered at the Palisades. He studied the steamers and sloops, and other river-craft, as they went by him. He even paid some attention to the passengers, for he never before had seen so many different kinds of people. He saw more than Bi and Kyle put together; and when the steamboat touched her wharf at last, he was thoroughly tired out, just with seeing and thinking.

Long before the wharf was reached, however, not only he, but the others as well, had experienced the grand sensation of their trip thus far. As the sun sank lower and lower, the steamboat pushed swiftly on down the river, between high banks that seemed all rocky precipice on one shore, and all beautiful places to live in on the other.

Aunt Keziah gathered her "chickens," as she

called them, under the tent-like awning forward; and there they all sat or stood, looking out for the beginnings of the great city. Even Bi himself had but an imperfect idea in his mind as to how great it really was, until he began to point it out to Kyle and Piney. Ships and steamers of all sorts and sizes; endless vistas of wharves and masts; houses and roofs and steeples, away, away, until eyes grew confused, searching among them for the lines of streets, and wondering how so many people came to be living all together there in one swarm.

It was a tremendous excitement to the two country boys; and aunt Keziah was quite right when she told them, "It ought to be as good to you as a term at the 'cademy, just to go sailing by all that."

She had seen it several times in the course of her life; but when Roxy asked her, "Has it grown up any since then? Has it?" she was compelled to admit that it had, and that there seemed to be more of it this time. She was right too; for it had very nearly doubled its size while she had been managing her farm, away off there in the country, among the little lakes.

The steamer safely entered its dock. The passengers began to pour out upon the pier. The journey's end was reached, and the boys were all "in the city."

CHAPTER XXXII.

A GREAT, NEW WORLD.

THERE is never room enough in any great city for all the boys that are born there to grow up, and do well there. The main reason is, that, of every three such boys, two are unfit for city life. Sometimes the third boy, also, is only half fit. Everybody knows, that, if the really successful men of any city are picked out by name, the great majority of them are found to have been born far away, and mostly in country places.

Turn the truth the other way, and city boys, properly brought up, are just the fellows to do well in the country, and especially in new countries; and so it is found that all our great West is full of successful men who came there from Eastern cities where there was no room or place for them. The country and the world is made better by a perpetual trading-off, back and forth, of its human beings of all sorts.

Piney Hunter and Kyle Wilbur awoke with the

sun on the morning after their arrival. They were in a very handsome bed, in a large and elegantly furnished room.

"I say, Piney," began Kyle; and right there he stopped, and drew a long breath.

"Kyle," said Piney, "we're here."

That was a fact; but they both got out of bed, and sat down on the edge of it, and stared around them for full five minutes, before they could more than half way make up their minds that the thing they had waked up to was a reality.

"Let's dress," said Piney.

"No cows to drive to pasture this morning, anyhow," said Kyle. "But they won't have breakfast for ever so long, I guess."

Bi had conducted them to their room the night before, and had kindly explained to them all the mysteries of its hot and cold water faucets, and the marvels of the bath-room near by.

They remembered it all now; but in spite of that, they were once more sitting still before they were half dressed. Piney was on the floor, with a shoe in one hand, and a sock in the other; while Kyle Wilbur found himself in a chair by the window, and hardly could have explained why or how he got just there. Both were trying to do the same thing; and that was to recall to mind all that had happened to them, and all they had seen, since

the lumber-wagon drove away from the farmhouse-gate, away off there "among the lakes."

It was one of those things which cannot be done. There was altogether too much of it. They had to give up remembering the journey itself, and leave all that to be done piecemeal at some other time. But there was one thing that came back to them splendidly: they could not forget any small part of the way they had been welcomed to the house they were in. Even Kyle himself had been compelled to come within a mile or so of feeling almost at home, by the hearty kindness of uncle Liph and aunt Sarah and grandfather Hunter. He would not have dared, however, to tell his own mother what a remarkable appetite he had brought to the supper-table, nor how much he had eaten before his friends were willing to let him stop. Even aunt Keziah's urging had been partly to blame for that, and Kyle came very near to saying as much to himself as he looked out of the window.

After supper there had been a positively miraculous evening, and both the boys had a queer and vague idea that their memories must be lying to them about some of the things that had been shown them. That any one house should contain so much that nobody had ever seen or heard of, was impossible.

"Piney!" exclaimed Kyle suddenly.

"What is it now?" said Piney, as he slowly shoved his foot into the shoe, and began to pull the sock on over both.

"I just dreamed it, that's all. There wasn't any fellow in that armor, and — Well, I did dream lots of things. It's all a mix" —

"Wake up!" half shouted Piney, as he kicked off the shoe, and put the sock on with a jerk. "It's all real, and here we are."

"Hush, Piney! We mustn't make any noise. It wouldn't do for us to wake 'em up."

"Well, no, we won't; but I kind o' wish somebody'd wake me up, and set me a-going."

They had not mentioned the matter before; but they had been moving around, since they left the bed, as stealthily as a pair of cats, and they had hardly spoken above a whisper. They were speedily dressed now; and Kyle asked doubtfully, —

"Piney, do you s'pose you can find your way down-stairs?"

"Of course I can. You've just got to keep going on down, that's all. But isn't Mr. Sadler a perfect brick!"

"Well, yes. Your uncle and aunt, and all your folks" —

"Yes. Grandfather and cousin Mary, and all the rest; but you know Mr. Sadler told us to come down and take a look at the store, first thing we did."

"And he said he'd show us how they did business in the city."

Kyle said that in a subdued and awe-struck voice, as if he were speaking of something solemn and mysterious. There might be some reason for that too; since if George Sadler, or any other man, could explain "how they do business in the city," he would be doing a kind of miracle.

They shut the chamber-door behind them without its making a sound, and their careful footfalls on the stairs would hardly have aroused a watchdog. Once upon the parlor-floor, the one door that stood wide open invited them into the library. They walked on and in, a good deal as if possibly some curiosity or other might be lying in wait for them; but hardly had they crossed the threshold before something almost like a voice seemed to speak to them from away up on the opposite wall. They were startled for a second or so; but there was plenty of light for them to see the yellowish face of the "cuckoo-clock" from which the sound came, as its wooden bird fluttered in and out, and they understood the matter.

"Six o'clock, Piney," whispered Kyle. "We must have been an awful long time getting dressed."

"The rest ain't up yet. Guess they were pretty tired. I say, Kyle, we must manage to get out of doors, or I'll choke."

“Do you s’pose we can do it? Is there any way out as early as this?”

“There’s just got to be!”

It seemed a daring thing to do, but Piney was a fellow of a good deal of courage; and, after all, he was in his own uncle’s house. He led the way through the hall straight to the great double-doored front entrance. He let down the loose “night-chain,” and turned the great key that stood guard in the massive old-fashioned lock. Then he was puzzled for a good three minutes of ingenious efforts to open that door.

“Piney,” suggested Kyle, “it’s the little lock up there that’s in the way.”

“That’s so. It’s what they call a night-latch. I’ve heard of ’em.”

He mastered that last barrier; and in a few minutes the two boys were out upon the ample doorstep, drawing full breaths of fresh air and astonishment. Every thing around them, in every direction, told them that they were in the city. The very pavement seemed to look up at them knowingly, and remark, —

“You never saw any thing just like me before.”

Kyle Wilbur had carefully shut the door behind him when they came out, and there could not be any harm in that; but now Piney remarked, —

“I believe I’d like to take a bit of a walk before breakfast.”

"Come on. Let's go," said Kyle. "I ain't half sure I know where my hat is; but we can go in, and look around."

He said he could, and he fully believed it until he tried to open that front door. The wicked night-latch had done it. Twenty such boys, and twenty more, could not have made their way into uncle Liph's house without the help of somebody inside.

"I won't ring the bell," said Piney dolefully, — "not at this time in the morning."

"What on earth'll we do?"

"I don't care, Kyle. Let's just go it bareheaded. We won't go far."

"Bareheaded, Piney? Well, if you say so. Besides, we can't go any other way just now."

It was a warm, glorious July morning, and there was no danger at all that either of them would injure the kind of complexion he had brought with him. They forgot all about their hats in less than half a minute, as they walked on past square after square of great silent houses.

"People do stay in bed awfully late in the city," remarked Kyle.

"And they sit up awfully late nights, to make up for it," said Piney; "but I'd like to live here, for all that. Somehow I kind o' feel as if I were going to do it!"

Kyle was silent; but just that very thought and

feeling had been at work in him all the morning. It worked harder and harder, and he was less and less inclined to talk, even after they wheeled around, and began to walk slowly back towards uncle Liph's house. He spoke at last.

"Piney, do you know anywhere near how long we've been gone?"

"I couldn't more'n guess. Fact is, Kyle, I've been keeping track for fear we'd get on the wrong street."

"We couldn't. We haven't turned a corner. We've gone straight. I know we ain't lost."

"No; but folks are beginning to look at us. We're bareheaded."

That was so; and there were more people in the streets now, and windows and doors were opening; and a great muffled roar of a city getting at work was beginning to come to their ears with the wind from the south.

"That's the house, Piney. Shall we have to ring the bell to get in?"

"I guess we'll have to, if we want any breakfast."

"I do."

"Hullo! If there there isn't Mr. Sadler! Hurry up."

There he was, truly; and he had come to take his breakfast at uncle Liph's, and "talk business"

a little before going down town to do it; and he had a latch-key, and he was there to let his young friends from the country in without ringing. It was the very thing, truly; but he had to laugh when they told about their hats, and how they had locked themselves out. He took them into the library, and talked with them and Bi until Mary came in, bringing Roxy and Susie to do all the rest of the talking.

Somehow or other, it seemed as if Mr. Sadler and Mary made all the plans for spending that day, and several that were to come after it; for aunt Sarah and the rest assented to whatever those two were agreed upon. It almost looked as if the older members of the family had given up the direction of it to their "junior partners." Anyhow, one result of that wonderful first breakfast in the city was that Bi Hunter and Piney and Kyle went down town with Mr. Sadler, and the two country boys went wild over what he had to show them and tell them of "business-life." Kyle Wilbur hardly said a word after he left the house, and Piney only spoke when he was spoken to. Of course they could not look around the great store and the counting-room all the forenoon; and Bi's work came right after Mr. Sadler's. Both of the boys managed to talk as soon as they had only Bi to talk to, and the three together made a great day of it. Another day followed that, and another, and another; and then

there came the wonder, to Piney and Kyle, of a Fourth of July in the city, with whole regiments of soldiers to look at, and all that sort of splendor. All the while the fascination of it grew and grew; until, when the end of their week came, and aunt Keziah said she must take them all home, neither Roxy nor her brother nor Kyle Wilbur could have answered, if anybody had asked suddenly, whether it had been two months or only an hour or so since the steamboat landed them in the city.

It was hard to go; and yet they all wanted to get home, and get rested, somehow. They got away, with a great deal of help from Mr. Sadler and cousin Mary, who never left them till they were safely aboard another steamboat; and they were hardly in motion up the Hudson before Piney turned to Kyle, and said, —

“Had a good time, Kyle?”

“Good time? Guess so. Grand!”

“I’m coming back some day.”

“Are you? So am I.”

“Let’s just study! I want to know as much as Sadler does.”

“You can’t do it, Piney Hunter.”

“Mebbe he didn’t know any more’n we do when he began.”

“P’r’aps he didn’t, but he does now. I’m coming some day.”

"Kyle," said Piney, a little solemnly, "do you know, I heard cousin Mary say to Mr. Sadler, 'What do you think now, George?' and he said to her, 'Well, Mary, they'll do, both of 'em.'"

That was years and years ago, and there have been a great many changes since then; but if anybody, walking down Broadway in the daytime, will look for a long sign, away across a double storefront, he may discover what came of that summer "among the lakes," and that visit to the great city.

The sign that tells the story is that of "Sadler, Hunter, and Wilbur;" and the firm is a large one, with several old partners, and as many young ones. Mrs. Mary Sadler is very fond of having Mrs. Roxy Wilbur and Mrs. Richard Hunter come and take tea with her; and every now and then they have a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Bayard Hunter, especially in the winter. At any other time nothing can tempt "uncle Bi" away from his model of a farm, away up country "Among the Lakes."

SCRIBNER'S STANDARD JUVENILE BOOKS.

THE BOY'S
Library of Legend and Chivalry.

EDITED BY SIDNEY LANIER,

And richly illustrated by FREDERICKS, BENSELL, and KAPPES.

THE BOY'S KING ARTHUR.

THE BOY'S FROISSART.

KNIGHTLY LEGENDS OF WALES.

THE BOY'S PERCY.

Four volumes, cloth, uniform binding. Price per set \$7.00.

Sold separately. Price per volume \$2.00.

"Amid all the strange and fanciful scenery of these stories, character and the ideals of character remain at the simplest and the purest. The romantic history transpires in the healthy atmosphere of the open air, on the green earth beneath the open sky. . . . The figures of Right, Truth, Justice, Honor, Purity, Courage, Reverence for Law, are always in the background; and the grand passion inspired by the book is for strength to do well and nobly in the world." — *The Independent.*

THE BOY'S
Library of Pluck and Action.

A JOLLY FELLOWSHIP,

By FRANK R. STOCKTON.

**HANS BRINKER;
OR, THE SILVER SKATES.**

A STORY OF LIFE IN HOLLAND.

By MRS. MARY MAPES DODGE.

THE BOY EMIGRANTS,

By NOAH BROOKS.

PHAETON ROGERS,

By ROSSITER JOHNSON.

Four volumes, 12mo, in a box, illustrated, \$5.00.

Sold separately, price per volume \$1.50.

In the "*Boy's Library of Pluck and Action*," the design was to bring together the representative and most popular books of four of the best known writers for young people. The names of Mary Mapes Dodge, Frank R. Stockton, Noah Brooks, and Rossiter Johnson are familiar ones in every household, and a set of books, to which each has contributed one, forms a present that will delight the heart of every boy who likes manly, spirited, and amusing tales. The volumes are beautifully illustrated and uniformly bound in a most attractive form.

Charles Scribner's Sons, Publishers, 743 and 745 Broadway, New York.

SCRIBNER'S STANDARD JUVENILE BOOKS.

FRANK R. STOCKTON'S POPULAR STORIES.

THE STORY OF VITEAU.

With sixteen full-page illustrations by R. B. BIRCH.

One volume, 12mo, extra cloth. \$1.50.

In "The Story of Viteau," Mr. Stockton has opened a new vein, and one that he has shown all his well-known skill and ability in working. While describing the life and surroundings of Raymond, Louis, and Agnes at Viteau at the Castle of De Baran, or in the woods among the *Cotereaux*, he gives a picture of France in the age of chivalry, and tells, at the same time, a romantic and absorbing story of adventure and knightly daring. Mr. Birch's spirited illustrations add much to the attraction of the book.

A JOLLY FELLOWSHIP.

Illustrated. One volume, 12mo, extra cloth. \$1.50.

"'A Jolly Fellowship,' by Mr. Frank Stockton, is a worthy successor to his 'Rudder Grange.' Although written for lads, it is full of delicious nonsense that will be enjoyed by men and women. . . . The less serious parts are described with a mock gravity that is the perfection of harmless burlesque, while all the nonsense has a vein of good sense running through it, so that really useful information is conveyed to the young and untravelled reader's mind." — *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.

THE FLOATING PRINCE, AND OTHER FAIRY TALES.

With illustrations by BENSELL and others. *One volume, quarto, boards. \$1.50.*

"Stockton has the knack, perhaps genius would be a better word, of writing in the easiest of colloquial English, without descending to the plane of the vulgar or commonplace. The very perfection of his work hinders the reader from perceiving at once how good of its kind it is. . . . With the added charm of a most delicate humor, — a real humor, mellow, tender, and informed by a singularly quaint and racy fancy, — his stories become irresistibly attractive." — *Philadelphia Times*.

NEW EDITIONS OF OLD FAVORITES.

ROUNDABOUT RAMBLES IN LANDS OF FACT AND FICTION.

One volume, quarto, boards, with very attractive lithographed cover, three hundred and seventy pages, two hundred illustrations. A new edition. Price reduced from \$3.00 to \$1.50.

TALES OUT OF SCHOOL.

One volume, quarto, boards, with handsome lithographed cover, three hundred and fifty pages, nearly two hundred illustrations. A new edition. Price reduced from \$3.00 to \$1.50.

Charles Scribner's Sons, Publishers, 743 and 745 Broadway, New York.

SCRIBNER'S BOOKS FOR THE YOUNG.

THE AMERICAN GIRL'S HANDY BOOK.

How to Amuse Yourself and Others.

By LINA AND ADELA B. BEARD.

With nearly 500 Illustrations by the authors. *One volume, square 8vo. \$3.00.*

Full of information upon the thousand and one things that interest every girl, this volume forms a notable companion to the book for boys by Daniel C. Beard, brother of the present authors, published last year. Everything that girls want to know about their sports, games, and winter afternoon and evening work, is told clearly and simply in this helpful and entertaining volume. Beginning with April Fool's Day, the authors take their readers through the circuit of the year, dwelling upon the sports, games, etc., appropriate to each season and to all the holidays, and furnishing welcome instruction regarding the many little accomplishments that girls like to become proficient in. The volume is fully and handsomely illustrated from drawings by the authors, whose designs are in the best sense illustrative of the text.

[From the Author's Preface.]

One of our objects is to impress upon the minds of the girls the fact that they all possess talent and ability to achieve more than they suppose possible, and we would encourage a belief in the remark made by a famous Frenchman: "When you Americans undertake anything you never stop to ascertain if it be possible, you simply *do it*."

We desire also to help awaken the inventive faculty, usually uncultivated in girls, and, by giving detailed methods of new work and amusement, to put them on the road which they can travel and explore alone.

We know well the feeling of hopelessness which accompanies vague directions, and, to make our explanations plain and lucid, we have ourselves, with very few exceptions, made all of the articles, played the games, and solved the problems described.

The materials employed in the construction of the various articles are within easy reach of all, and the outlay, in most cases, little or nothing.

THE FIRST REALLY PRACTICAL BOY'S BOOK.

THE AMERICAN BOY'S HANDY BOOK;

Or, WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT.

By DANIEL C. BEARD.

With 300 Illustrations by the author. *One volume. 8vo. \$2.00.*

Mr. Beard's book is the first to tell the active, inventive, and practical American boy the things he really wants to know, the thousand things he wants to do, and the ten thousand ways in which he can do them, with the helps and ingenious contrivances which every boy can either procure or make.

The author divides the book among the sports of the four seasons; and he has made an almost exhaustive collection of the cleverest modern devices, besides himself inventing an immense number of capital and practical ideas.

Charles Scribner's Sons, Publishers, 743-745 Broadway, New York.

SCRIBNER'S BOOKS FOR THE YOUNG.

A NEW BOOK BY MRS. BURNETT.

LITTLE SAINT ELIZABETH

AND OTHER STORIES.

By FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

With 12 new drawings by REGINALD B. BIRCH. Square 8vo, \$1.50.

"Beautifully illustrated and bound."—*The Advance*.

"Little Saint Elizabeth is a child to be charmed with."—*Boston Transcript*.

"This is a book to make a child happy, and a grown person still happier in giving it."—*The Churchman*.

"There is much the same charm about the story that gives the title to this volume that made 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' so attractive."

—*Christian Intelligencer*.

"A very winsome and pathetic little tale, and has in it all the appreciative sympathy that shows its writer a lover of children."—*Providence Journal*.

LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY.

By FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

Beautifully illustrated by R. B. BIRCH. One volume, square 8vo, handsomely bound, \$2.00.

"In 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' we gain another charming child to add to our gallery of juvenile heroes and heroines; one who teaches a great lesson with such truth and sweetness that we part with him with real regret when the episode is over."—LOUISA M. ALCOTT.

UNIFORM WITH "LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY."

SARA CREWE;

Or, WHAT HAPPENED AT MISS MINCHIN'S.

By FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

Illustrated by R. B. BIRCH. Square 8vo, \$1.00.

As a beautiful story filled with an exquisite pathos and sweetness, "Sara Crewe" will at once take rank with the author's enormously successful "Little Lord Fauntleroy," now in its forty-fifth thousand. Few of the tens of thousands of people, young and old, who have been charmed by Mrs. Burnett's narrative of the adventures of her boy-hero will be satisfied until they have read about the strange things that befell Sara Crewe at Miss Minchin's.

As her former story had a boy for its hero, so this has a girl for its heroine—a weird, queer little creature, whose elfish cleverness and odd ways, with her romantic imaginings and "supposes," are made of striking interest by the exquisite art with which the author has woven them into the texture of the story, and make every reader her friend. Mr. Birch's illustrations admirably reflect the spirit of the story.

Charles Scribner's Sons, Publishers, 743-745 Broadway, New York.

SCRIBNER'S BOOKS FOR THE YOUNG.

THE MERRY ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD, Of Great Renown in Nottinghamshire.

Written and Illustrated by HOWARD PYLE.

One volume, quarto, full embossed leather, \$4.50. Cloth. \$3.00.

In this book, undoubtedly the most original and elaborate ever produced by an American artist, Mr. Pyle has gathered from the old ballads and legends, and told with pencil and pen, the complete and consecutive story of Robin Hood and his merry men in their haunts in Sherwood forest. His sunny, open-air nature, his matchless skill at archery, his generous disposition, his love of fair play, and his ever-present courtesy to women, form a picture that has no counterpart in the folk-lore of any other people.

A NEW EDITION. ILLUSTRATED.

KIDNAPPED.

Being Memoirs of the Adventures of David Balfour in the
year 1751.

By ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

With sixteen full-page Illustrations. *One volume, 12mo. \$1.25.*

"Mr. Stevenson has never appeared to greater advantage than in 'Kidnapped.' . . . No better book of its kind than those 'Memoirs of the Adventures of David Balfour' has ever been written."—*The Nation*.

THE OLD-FASHIONED FAIRY BOOK.

By MRS. BURTON HARRISON.

With many quaint Illustrations by Miss ROSINA EMMET.

One volume, square 16mo. \$1.25.

"The little ones, who so willingly go back with us to 'Jack the Giant-Killer,' 'Blue-beard,' and the kindred stories of our childhood, will gladly welcome Mrs. Burton Harrison's 'Old-Fashioned Fairy Tales,' where the giant, the dwarf, the fairy, the wicked princess, the ogre, the metamorphosed prince, and all the heroes of that line come into play and action. . . . The graceful pencil of Miss Rosina Emmet has given a pictorial interest to the book, and the many pictures scattered through its pages accord well with the good old-fashioned character of the tales."—FRANK R. STOCKTON.

BRIC-A-BRAC STORIES.

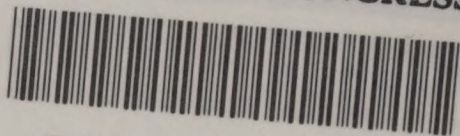
By MRS. BURTON HARRISON.

Illustrated and Cover designed by WALTER CRANE. *One volume, 12mo. \$2.00.*

"Upon the whole it is to be wished that every boy and girl in America, or anywhere else, might become intimately acquainted with the contents of this book. There is more virtue in one of these stories than in the entire library of modern juvenile literature."—JULIAN HAWTHORNE.

Charles Scribner's Sons, Publishers, 743-745 Broadway, New York.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00025696359

